

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **BIBLICAL UNITY** **“How to Have Unity”**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. This is our second lesson in our study of unity. We dealt in our first lesson with some misconceptions of unity. We spoke about how important unity is, but at the same time we need to not fall into the category of some misconceptions, some false doctrines that people are saying, “This is unity.” We talked about how we cannot compromise to have unity because that is sinful. We talked about how we just simply cannot ignore sin because that is sinful, too. Then we dealt with it does it matter what we are unified on. There are some out in the world who are saying, “Well, it just really doesn’t matter what you’re unified on as long as you’re unified.” But we saw that we must be unified on doctrine and on truth to be pleasing to God.

So in this study we’re going to be looking at how to have unity. What it means to have unity. The way that we can have unity. There are three different keys that we can use. And if we use these three keys, every time we will have a biblical, God-pleasing unity. So the first key that we are going to be dealing with in this lesson is the key of having one source or one standard of authority. We must have one standard that we go by. And this is just common sense in everyday world. Think about a football game for instance. Maybe on a Friday night, a Saturday, we see people out there playing football. And they are unified. They all know the rules. They all know what a touchdown is. And they all understand the different points and what all it means. How do they know that? Because they have a standard they go by. They have a rule book that they go by. Well, what would happen if this Friday night two teams went out to play football and one of them decided to use soccer rules, how to play soccer, and the other one said, “Let’s learn how to play baseball. I want to use these rule books.” Well, you wouldn’t be playing football any more. Why? Because you’re not going by the one standard. We must follow the one standard. What is that one standard for us? In 2 Timothy 3 beginning in verse 14 Paul is talking to Timothy, and he says,

“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Now Paul is writing this to Timothy. And notice some things that he said to him. First of all, he said that from the Scriptures we can have wisdom to know what to do to be saved. We don’t have to have any other books. We don’t have to have any manmade creeds or manmade opinions telling us, “Well, this is what you need to do to be saved.” But it’s through the Scriptures that we can have that wisdom and know what we must do to be saved. Not only that, but he says that only Scripture, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete.” Now that’s an important word. The man of God may be

complete. If we can be complete with the Word of God and with Scripture, then what else do we need? Well, the answer is we don't need anything else. The Word of God is our standard. And it goes on to say that we will be through the Scriptures thoroughly equipped for every good work. But not only that, in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, when Paul was writing to the Thessalonians, what did he say to them? Well, he said, "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing." Why did he thank God? "Because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God." You see, when the inspired men of the Bible speak, they did not speak by their own opinions. They did not say, "Well, this is what I believe" or "This is what I think." They were speaking as the Word of God. They were speaking things they were being moved by the Holy Spirit, and what they were saying was in truth the Word of God. So when we read the Bible and we see these letters that were written by Paul and by Peter and by John, these were not things that were just their opinion. These were not just their letters that they were writing because they wanted to. These were things that they were saying from the Word of God, from God Himself, from the Holy Spirit. It is truth. When we use the Word of God, we are using the truth to determine our life. Second Peter 1:3 says, "As His divine power." As whose divine power? As God's divine power "has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." Through the Word of God we have all things that pertain to life and godliness. We can know how to be a good citizen by the Word of God. We can know how to go to Heaven by the Word of God. We can know how to be a good husband or a good wife through the Word of God. We can know all these things through the Word of God, through the knowledge of the Word of God.

But what about using other books for authority? What does the Bible have to say about that? We understand that the Bible is enough. The Bible alone is enough. And don't misunderstand me. When I talk about other books, I'm not talking about commentaries—other books that we just maybe look at to see what someone else says and compare it. I'm talking about books that people say, "This is authority. This is just as important as the Bible." What about those? Are we to do away with those? Are we to use them? Is it something we can choose from? Well, we need to learn some history first to understand that it wasn't until 325 A.D. when even an attempt was made to bring in any other books. It wasn't until that time that even someone tried to say, "Well, let's go by something else other than the Bible. Yes, let's use the Bible, but let's something else as well." What does the Bible have to say about that? You see, you have those who have *The Book of Mormon*. And they say they go by the Bible, but they also go by *The Book of Mormon*. Then you have those who use the catechism, and you have all these books. What does the Bible say about those books? First Peter 4:11 says, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever." If anyone speaks, how are they to speak? They are to speak as the oracles of God. When we say something we need to say, "Thus saith the Lord, thus saith the Word of God." I find it interesting that in Matthew 4 when Jesus Christ Himself, after He had just been baptized, He was led into the mountain by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Satan. And Jesus Christ, here we have God on Earth Who had the ability to do anything He wanted to. He could have snapped His fingers and Satan could have been gone. But when He faced Satan face to face and one on one, the way He dealt with Him was Scripture. He used the Word of God. "Thus says the Lord." And if we speak, we need to speak as the oracles of God. This is what the Bible says. The Word of God says this. This is not my opinion. This is not what my preacher says. This is what God says. So we are to speak only as the oracles of God. In 1 Corinthians 4:6 Paul reminds us that we may learn in him not to think

beyond what is written. We don't need to think beyond what is written. When it comes to the Word of God, we have to look at the commandments. We have to look at the examples. And then we have to look at the principle. Now, if there is none of that found, then we shouldn't think beyond what is written. A lot of times people say, "Well, the Bible doesn't say I can't do it. There is no verse that the Bible says that I can't do this." But where in the Bible does it say that we can? What authorizes that? What principle authorizes that? What example authorizes the act that we are doing? We are not to go or think beyond what is written.

Now, at the end of the book, in reference to Revelation, notice what John says in Revelation 22:18. He records this, what Jesus says. John is recording this. Jesus says, "

"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

What are we not to do? We're not to add to God's Word. We're not to take away from God's Word. Now people say, "Well, this is just in reference to the Book of Revelation." We need to understand that all throughout the Word of God there's never been a time that was OK to add, take away, or alter His Word. Deuteronomy 4:2, under the Old Law, they were not to add or take away. Proverbs 30:6, we're not to add to God's Word. Galatians 1:6-10 is the next verse that I want us to look at. This is a very important verse that we need to keep in mind, that we need to underline in our Bibles, that we need to remember. Paul is writing to those in Galatia. And here they are, these Christians who were once faithful. Paul had been with them. They were living a godly life. But then these false teachers came in and trying to convince them that they didn't have to do these things, to go back under the Old Law. You know, you don't have to follow this. What Paul is saying is not correct. Listen to what he says in verse 6. "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ." So he begins by saying that he marvels. He can't believe that they are turning away. "What are you turning away when you've found the truth? And why are you turning to a different Gospel?" This Gospel, Paul goes on to say, is really not a Gospel. It's what people want to make out to be a good news, but in reality it's not. He says it's really not another. But then he says, "Even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." Even if we, or an angel from Heaven. Now look how important that is. Tonight, today we know that miracles don't happen according to 1 Corinthians 13. But even if an angel were to come to you from Heaven and tell you, "Here's something you need to begin teaching. It's not in the Bible, but you need to go ahead and teach this anyway." Even if that happened, you are to be accursed. You are not to take what he says. But he goes on and repeats it. Now when the Bible says something, we need to listen to it. But when it repeats the same thing, we really need to listen to it. In verse 9 it says, "As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." Anathema is the word there used. It's the strongest condemnation, the strongest cursing that is used in the Bible. In verse 10 Paul says, "Do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." I would not be bondservant of Christ if I was trying to please men. I'm trying to please God. And I'm telling you, we cannot add or take away from the Word of God. Even an angel does not have that power or authority.

So, let's take that in mind. If an angel from Heaven does not have the authority or power to add or take away from the Word of God, then what right do we as man have? We as mankind, what right do we say, "Well, we're going to write this book, and it's going to be just as important as the Bible. We're going to begin making this command, and it's going to be just as important as the Bible." We have no right to add or take away. What does the Bible say about those added books? It condemns them. And those men who try to bring them in, let them be cursed, Paul said, if you try to bring these other books in. Our standard is the Word of God and only the Word of God. Nothing more, and nothing less. We must take everything that is in the Bible. Now some like to come to the Bible, and they like to agree that they use the Bible. But they take some parts out. They say, "Well, I don't like this verse. I'm not going to use this verse." We must take the whole Bible as it is and apply it to our one standard or one authority. So that's the first key. That's the first key to having biblical unity. We must have one authority. We must have one standard that we go by.

The second key is that we must know and understand what that one standard or authority is. Now let me ask you a question. What good would it be if we all agreed that the Bible was our one standard, it's what we need to go by, but we didn't know what it says? Just like the football game illustration we started out with, everyone may agree, "Well, yes, we are going to use this book on how to play football, so let's go out there and play," but what if you don't know what's in the book? You're never going to have unity. So the second key is we must know and understand what the Bible says. In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul writes to Timothy and he says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Now that "rightfully dividing" literally means to draw a straight line, to cut a straight line. There are those today who are adding to the Word of God. They are subtracting from the Word of God. But we have very few who are willing to get in the Word of God, to study the Word of God, to be a good student, and to divide the Word of God. People a lot of times look out into the world and they say, "Well, why is there so much division? There must not be a God." That's not the case. The reason is people are not willing to take the time to study and see what the Bible has to say itself. In Acts 17:11 Paul had just left Thessalonica. And notice what he has to say about Berea. He comes to the Berea Church of Christ. And he says that these in Berea were more fair minded than those in Thessalonica. Why were they more fair minded? "In that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." Why were they more fair minded? They searched the Scriptures daily. A lot of times we feel justified because we look at our neighbors, we look at our family members, and say, "Well, they never study their Bible. And at least I come to Sunday morning Bible study or Wednesday night Bible study." Those things are important. We need to take time to go to those and not forsake the assembly. But at the same time, coming there alone won't be enough. We have to study every single day. A lot of times we say we don't have time. Times have changed. Well, those in Berea, they had entertainment that they could have found. They had sporting events that they could have gone to. They had work that they had to attend to. But they still found time to search their Scriptures daily. The reason was they made a choice. Just as Matthew 6:33 says, we must, too, seek first the kingdom of God and all its righteousness if we want to go to Heaven and if we want to have a true God-pleasing unity. First Thessalonians 5:21 says that we are to test all things, that we are to hold fast what is good. In Romans 12:1-2 the same thing is said. Paul said, "

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

That you may do what? That you may prove it. So 1 Thessalonians 5 tells us that we are to test all things. Romans 12 tells us that we are to prove all things as well. And then Ephesians 5:10 says that we are to find out what is acceptable to the Lord. Now if we don't know the Bible, how are we ever going to be able to prove what we want to do against the Bible? See, our mindset should always be, "What does the Bible have to say about this? Let's go to the Bible and see if I should be doing this or not." And if we don't have biblical knowledge, there is no way that we can ever go to the Bible and know what it says because we cannot find out the will of God if we don't study and know the will of God. Second Peter 3:18 says that we are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It goes on to say, "To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." He's praised the Lord. But he says that we to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." There's going to be times that we may not know as much as we do later on in our life. In fact, every day we should be growing. We should be gaining more and more knowledge every single day. From the day that we came out of that water that we were baptized to have our sins washed away, we should be gaining more knowledge. We should know more about the Lord. We should be closer to God because we study His Word. What happens if we don't? Well, those in Hebrews 5:12 it says, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." What was Paul writing here? Go on to verse 13. He says, "For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." There's a lot of people today who don't know the difference between right and wrong and good and evil because they're not studying their Bibles. We look out into the world of all these practices of homosexuality, of abortion, of all these terrible things that are happening. And people say, "Well, there's nothing wrong with that." Why? Because they can't discern good and evil. They don't know the difference any more. As Christians, sometimes, even in the Book of Hebrews they fell into that. They had been Christians for some thirty years, and Paul said, "You should be teachers. But instead you need somebody to teach you." Let us never fall into that category. Hosea 4:6 is a very sad verse, and I hope it can never be said about us today. It says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." The way that it trickles down, the way that we live our life is going to affect our children. Today I believe we are living in a generation of people who, their parents sometimes didn't raise them the right way. They didn't teach them the Word of God. They didn't bring them up in the way of the Lord. And because of that, it's affecting them. And it's going to affect their children. When we reject knowledge, when we reject God, that's always going to be the result. Death and destruction will always be the end result of that.

So what's the third key? We talked about how the first key, we need to make sure that we have one standard. We saw that that standard is the Word of God. It's not anything else. It's not what my preacher says. It's not what the teacher says. It's not what some other book says. But it's only the Word of God can be our standard. That's what the Bible says. Any other book to be held as the same authority as the Bible would be condemned. Then we saw the second key is that we must know what's in that standard. We must know what's in the Word of God. And then last, here we have the third key. And that is, we must be obedient and follow the one standard. Now this should go without saying, but it doesn't. I know of people who, they believe the Bible is the only standard. They know what the Bible says. But they are not willing to do it. In fact, a lot of times when you tell them,

“This is what the Bible says,” they say, “I know what it says, but...” Or, “I know what it means, but...” For some reason they are not willing to do it. So we must be obedient to and follow the one standard. James 1 beginning in verse 21. James says, “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only.” What did James say? We are to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.

“Deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

Notice the illustration that James uses. He says, “Well, think about it as a mirror.” Maybe there was a night that you were going out to eat, maybe a birthday party or some special event. And you got all dressed up for it, and you are walking by, and one last time you check in the mirror. And maybe you notice something on your face, or your hair is messed up. What are you going to do? Well, you’re going to fix that. But James is saying in the same way that there are those who they look into the Word of God. They see what the Bible has to say in order to fix their lives. But they don’t do it. That would be the same thing as someone walking by a mirror, seeing they need something to fix, noticing it, and going, “Well, I need to fix that, but I’m going to go on anyway.” See, we have to do what the Bible has to say because it goes on to say that the one who does look into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, he’s not a forgetful hearer but he is a doer of the Word. And this one is the one that will be blessed. The one that does the work. The one that is not just sitting there listening to it and has that knowledge, but one who is doing the work. James 2:24 says, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” The only time the words “faith” and “only” are mentioned together is when it condemns it. There are many people out today in the denominational world who are teaching that we are saved by faith in faith only. Are we saved by faith? Absolutely. But we are not saved by faith only. If we are saved by faith only, then grace wouldn’t play a part. Or repentance. Or baptism. Or confession wouldn’t play a part. We are saved, but not faith only. He goes on to say, “Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way?” How was Rahab justified? By her works. She was obedient. Now these are not works of her own merit, of her own gaining, but works of obedience and obeying God. And then James says in James 2:26, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” And so we need to understand that it’s very key that not only we know the right facts, but we are willing to do them. Hebrews 11:8 says that “by faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.” By faith Abraham what? He obeyed. When we have a true faith, we have to obey. We have to trust. We sing that song, “Trust and Obey.” That’s what we must do. That’s what Abraham did. He trusted in God, and he was obedient, and he obeyed God. In Romans 6:17 Paul says, “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.” We are still slaves of sin until we obey the doctrine of Christ, until we obey the Word of God. We can believe that God is Who He says He is, that He is the true God. We can believe in Jesus Christ. But it’s not until we are obedient and do what He says that we can be delivered from sin. In Acts 2:44 I want us to notice this. “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common.” Why did they have all things in common? Because “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” They continued in the apostles’ doctrine. Second John 1:9 says, “Whoever transgresses and

does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” Hebrews 5:9 says, “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to” who? “To all who obey Him.” Until we obey Christ, we are not saved. We must obey. And then we read in Acts 6:7, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

I want to ask you, have you been obedient to the faith? You may believe that the Word of God is the only thing that we can go by. You might know what the Word of God says. But have you been obedient in following the Word of God? Have you heard (Romans 10:17)? Have you believed that (John 3:16)? Have you repented of your sins (Acts 17:30)? Have you confessed (Romans 10:10)? And have you been baptized to have your sins washed away, not as some outward sign, but we must be baptized as 1 Peter 3:21 says. It is baptism that saves us because it is then that we come in contact with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We hope that this lesson has been beneficial, and that if you have not obeyed, we hope that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “HOW TO HAVE UNITY”

1. This lesson presents three “keys” necessary for biblical unity. What is the first of those keys?
2. What instruction is found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that is critical to biblical unity?
3. What impact do manmade creeds have on biblical unity?
4. According to 1 Thessalonians 2:13, what did the Christians in Thessalonica do that precipitated biblical unity?
5. According to 2 Peter 1:3, what has God given us?
6. According to 1 Peter 4:11, when we speak on religious matters, how are we to speak?
7. In Matthew 4 we find the story of Jesus being tempted by Satan. How did Christ respond to Satan’s three temptations?
8. What important points are found in Revelation 22:18 that relate to biblical unity?
9. What important point is found in Deuteronomy 4:2 that relates to biblical unity?
10. What important point is found in Proverbs 30:6 that relates to biblical unity?
11. What did the apostle Paul have to say in Galatians 1:6 about “another Gospel”?
12. What did Paul say in Galatians 1:8 that relates to biblical unity?
13. What did Paul say in Galatians 1:10 will happen to us if we strive to please men?
14. What important point is found in 1 Corinthians 4:6 that relates to biblical unity?
15. This lesson presents three “keys” necessary for biblical unity. What is the second of those keys?
16. In 2 Timothy 2:15, what did Paul instruct his young protégé Timothy to do?
17. In Acts 17:11, what commendation did Paul offer the Christians in Berea?
18. What important point is contained in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 that relates to biblical unity?
19. What important point is found in Romans 12:1-2 that relates to biblical unity?
20. What important point is contained in Ephesians 5:10 that relates to biblical unity?
21. This lesson presents three “keys” necessary for biblical unity. What is the third of those keys?