

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

BIBLICAL UNITY **“Unity and Division”**

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 our third lesson in our series of unity. We began dealing with our first subject of some misconceptions of unity. We talked about how we cannot fall into the category of misconceptions, of compromise, or ignoring sin, or saying it doesn't matter what we're unified on as long as we're unified. We looked at those in our first lesson and saw that truth and doctrine really do matter. Then we looked in our second lesson, and we discovered how to have unity. We looked at three keys in having unity, and if we use those three keys we will have unity every time. We saw how the first key was that we must have one standard. We must have one book that we go by, and that's the Word of God and only the Word of God. We noticed that we have to know what's in the Bible, to study that one standard, to study the Word of God. And then we saw how we must be obedient to what the Bible says. We must do what the Bible says.

So in this lesson we're going to be talking about unity and division, or unity versus division. Since we see that it's pretty simple to have unity if we follow those three keys, why is there so much division in the world? Why, when we look at the world, are there different church buildings everywhere? If you just drive down the road sometimes, you can count different buildings, and just on one street or one road. Why is there so much division? In Psalm 133:1 the psalmist writes, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." If it's good for us to dwell together in unity, it's something that God wants, why is there so much division? Let's answer that question. In 1 John 4:1 John says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." We are to test what people are saying. There are many false teachers out in the world. And this has always been. In John's time there were false teachers when the church was just beginning. There were those who were coming in and bringing in false beliefs, just as there is today and will always be. But there are many false teachers. And what are we to do? We are to test to make sure what is being said is the truth. You see, in Matthew chapter 15 Jesus was dealing with the scribes and the Pharisees. And in verse 7 He said, "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" Why was Jesus calling them hypocrites? Why was Jesus condemning their actions? Because they were drawing near to Him with their mouth. They were praising God. But their heart was far from Him. They weren't really worshiping God. They were doing what they wanted. And Jesus calls it in verse 9 "vain worship." They were teaching as doctrine the commandments of men. There are many people today who are taking what men have always said or what man has been saying, and they have been applying that. And because of these false teachers, and because of all the false doctrine, what's going to come? Well, there's going to be splits. There's going to be division because of that. And because it's called by these false teachers and false teaching. Second Peter 2:1 says, "There were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers

among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction." Notice it says "who will secretly bring in destructive heresies." There are some out in the world today who want to destroy the Lord's church. They want to teach things that are contrary to the Bible. They want to go by and say, "Well, I know what this says, but this is what I say." And it says they will secretly do it. People who have fallen away from the Lord's church or people who are not living a faithful Christian life, and maybe who are not a Christian.... If you see it, you will not see just overnight it will change. Maybe you'll have a faithful Christian, and they will be living a faithful Christian life, or a congregation of the Lord's people. And from one Sunday to the next this big change won't all of a sudden happen. But secretly things will slowly begin to come in, and people will say, "Well, I don't see that big of a deal with it. I don't really have a problem with it. And because of this it's going to destroy the Lord's church and it's going to send many people's souls to Hell. Because of these false doctrines and false teachings, this division will be caused. We need to do what 1 Timothy 6:20 says. Paul is writing to Timothy, and he says, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge." We are to guard what was committed to us. Paul was warning Timothy and helping Timothy out and giving him these admonitions by saying, "There are going to be false teachers; there are false teachers among you. You need to guard. You need to make sure that nobody's going to be bringing this stuff in because there will be divisions if false teachers begin to come in and corrupt the Lord's church and corrupt people."

And it says also "what is falsely called knowledge." You know, that's interesting because sometimes you may have even yourself listened to a lesson, and you thought in the middle of the lesson, "I don't even know what this guy's saying. This stuff doesn't even make sense to me." You can't even sum up in a sentence what this man just said. But you hear other people around you talk about how wonderful and how great that lesson was. And you're thinking, "Why, I don't even know what he just said." But because he has a Ph.D. or because he has all these degrees, that false knowledge there we just claim that it must be true because he has all this education and because everyone else is saying that it's good. So, it's must be just good knowledge. We can't do that. We must guard what the Bible says and what has been committed to us, just like it was committed to Timothy. Colossians 2:23 says, "These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion." They appear to be good. You see, we look out in the world and all these things that are going on. And from a standpoint they appear to have wisdom to them. "So, well, yeah, that's a good way of doing things. This is drawing more people in and in. This is a good way to do worship. This is a new way to do worship." And from a worldly standpoint, wisdom says that. That does seem smart. That does seem like a good idea. But in reality it's condemned because it's self-imposed religion. It's things that we want to do. Well, at times we may leave worship services saying, "You know, I just really didn't get anything out of that today." But the question is, number one, "What did God get out of it, and what did you put into it?" If God didn't get anything out of it, that's what we need to be concerned about. Not about what you got out of it. Because if God gets something out of it, you will get something out of it because you are choosing to worship God in spirit and in truth. Jeremiah 6:14 says they also, in reference to false prophets, "healed the hurt of My people slightly." That word "slightly" also means more of a superficially. It's a fake type of healing. "Saying, 'Peace, peace!,' when there is no peace." Do you know people today who are living in sin, and there are preachers today saying, "Well, you're OK. You're all right. You don't have to worry about that." And they are calling, "Peace, peace!," but in reality there is no peace. What are they doing? Well, they are superficially healing that person. Or maybe on a temporary basis. They are making them feel good for a short period of time. I see a lot

of this in dealing with people who are in marriage, divorce, and remarriage situations. They have divorced for other reasons besides fornication. And Jesus, in Matthew 19:9, says there is only one reason to divorce, and that is for fornication. If that's not your reason for divorce, you have no right to remarry. But people say, "Peace, peace, you can remarry." When in reality there is no peace. It may heal that person for a little while. They may remarry and live in adultery, live in a sinful life, in peace from a worldly standpoint. On the Day of Judgment there will be no peace. So we need to make sure that we're not listening to people saying, "Peace, peace," just because that's what we want to hear. We need to hear what the Word of God has to say. In Jude verse 19 it says, "These are sensual persons who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." They don't have the fruit of the Spirit as Galatians chapter 5 tells us to have. They're not walking by the Word of God. They're not going to the Word of God and having a true faith in knowing what to do or abiding in that. Ephesians 4:14 says that we, and it deals with us, "we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting." Now this is our reaction to the false teaching. We should not be like children, tossed to and fro. I had a good friend one time. And me and him used to always hang out. And he had a little daughter who was about two or three years old. And there was one time we were at a store. And we were all smelling of candles. And of course, if it smelled good we would all make a sound that, yeah, it smelled good, meaning, "This smells good." Well, his little daughter, we saw that she was catching on to what we were doing. So we would smell one candle and act like it smelled good, and she would do whatever we would do. We would pick up maybe the same candle again and smell of it, and act like it smelled bad, and let her smell of it, and she would act like it would smell bad. Why? Because she was a little child. She was being tossed to and fro. This sounded good. This smelled good. Whatever you're doing, I'm just going to follow the crowd. But the Bible says we should no longer like children tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness of deceitful plottings. A lot of false teachers don't come out and say, "I'm a false teacher." A lot of people who are bringing in false doctrine, you can't all of a sudden just say that's false doctrine because.... You should, but sometimes you can't catch it because it is very crafty. So we need to be able to catch that. We need to be studying for ourself and not be like little children because if we are prepared we need to catch it and should catch it so that it does not come in. But we don't need to be like children being tossed to and fro.

But another reason why there's so many denominations is because people like false doctrine. They approve of it. They like what is being said. As earlier I was talking about a marriage, divorce, and remarriage situation. People like what is being said. They go from one place, and if they don't like what's being said, they'll just find a place that tells them what they want to hear. Jeremiah 5:30-31 says, "An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?" It's so sad that back in Jeremiah's time that was written, that was read. But today we could read the same thing and it could apply to us—that an astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it that way. Why is there so much division? People like to hear what they want to hear. Why would you go to one congregation (now this is from a worldly standpoint) saying, "Well, why would I want to go to one congregation that makes me change something, when I can go to this one and continue living in sin?" Well, see, it's because they're teaching at that one church something that the Bible doesn't teach. They are justifying that person's actions. They're bringing them in by entertainment. They are not doing what the Bible has to say, and they love it that way because they are getting to live a life that they want to live. In 2 Timothy 4:3 Paul again

is warning Timothy, saying that there's going to be those who have itching ears. Now we need to start picking up our Bibles—the sword of the Spirit—and preaching and teaching and abiding in the Word of God because there's too many people out there today who are trying to preach with a feather. They are tickling those itching ears. They're going out, and Paul warns Timothy that they're going to heap up teachers for themselves. If they can't find somebody here, then they'll go there and they'll find somebody until they can justify their actions. So how sad it is about all these false teachers and about all these false teachings. And it needs to be recognized that not everyone is doing this on purpose. Some maybe think what they're doing is right. They may be saying, "Well, you know, I'm doing this. And I know some disagree. But I believe it's the right thing." They're still a false teacher though. Notice the life of Paul. In Acts 23:1 when Paul was on trial, he said, "Before I was a Christian, everything I did I did with a good conscience." Everything that he did—he was persecuting the Lord's church, he was taking Christians and putting them into prison—he thought what he was doing was right. He had the right intentions. He was in ignorance. He had a good conscience about what he was doing. Yet he was still condemned. Why? Because he was not following the Bible. Today there may be people who, with good intentions, are telling you something. But if you know it's against the Word of God, it's because of them that we have division.

So I want us to now look at how does God feel about false teaching. How does He feel about false teachers when it comes to division? Psalm 119:104 says, "Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." The writer here, the psalmist, says, "Through Your precepts I get understanding." How? Through the Word of God we get the understanding. "Therefore I hate every false way." Psalm 119:128 says the same thing. Hate every false way. Hate false doctrine. One of the things the Lord hates.... In verse 16 of Proverbs 6 it says that these are some of the things the Lord hates. In verse 19 He hates a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren. Now there's some times (we're going to be looking at this a little bit later in this lesson and in the next lesson) that we do stand for the truth and there will be division. That's a godly division. And we may be looked upon as causing that division, but in essence it's those who are not doing the right thing who are causing the real division because they're not trying to follow the Bible. But in Proverbs 6:19 it tells us "a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren." So it's not just one who sows discord among brethren for standing for the truth, because we're going to look and see that many faithful Christians did that. And maybe today we have to do that. But it's when one speaks a false lie, or one speaks false witnesses, things of that nature. Those are the ones that are being condemned because they, based upon their false doctrine, are causing discord among the brethren.

So what must we do? What must we do since we know that God hates it? We must stand against it and oppose it. And it's interesting to note that some things make us mad when they really shouldn't make us mad. The Bible says that it's OK to be angry. We are to control our anger. We are not to let the Sun go down on our anger. But just like God is angry, we are to be angry at false doctrine. But too many times we get more angry when we hear somebody who pulled out in front of us. We see somebody who pulled out in front of us when we're driving down the road, and boy that makes us mad. Or maybe a car is going slow on the Interstate, and we wish that they would speed up. And boy, that angers us. But then when we see people who are teaching false doctrine, we see people who are trying to bring in things contrary to the Word of God, well, we don't even give that a second look. But we need to. We must hate it just as God hates it, and we must oppose it, and we need to be angry about it. Romans 16:17 says, "Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them." We are to mark them. We are to note them and avoid them so that we don't get caught up in

what they are saying in their false beliefs. Now we need to understand that they will not go unpunished. A lot of times we say, "Well, I've been living a good, faithful Christian life. And I look out into the world, and how come it seems that they're getting what they want all the time?" Maybe they're cheating on their wife, or they're not a faithful Christian, and you know they have nice cars, they have a nice house, and we think, "Why are they OK?" Well, justice will be served. They will not go unpunished, just like these false teachers, they will not go unpunished. They will be punished in the final day. Proverbs 19:5 says, "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape." It may seem right now on Earth they're getting away with it, but there's going to come a day when justice will be served, and they will not get away with it. They will be punished.

But not only those who teach it will be punished (and this is where we really need to listen). Those who take heed to what's being said will also be punished. Those who listen and follow this false teaching will also be punished. Notice in Romans 1:32 it says, "Who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." Not only those who do sin or commit sin are going to be lost in Hell for eternity, but those who approve of those, those who listen to false teaching, those who enjoy it, those who follow them, will be just as harshly condemned when it comes to the Day of Judgment. We are to work out our own salvation. We are not to rely on our preacher or parents or what anybody says. We are to go to the Word of God and see what the Bible has to say. Philippians 2:12 says, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation." How? "With fear and trembling." We are to work out our own salvation. In other words, we're not going to get to the Day of Judgment and say, "Well, they told me this, so I'm excused." We are accountable for what we do with our life and what our actions.

So what does the New Testament really say about division? When we get into the New Testament, we see that God hates it, and the reasons caused is because of all these false doctrines and false teachers, but what does the Bible have to say when it comes to division? In 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul writes and he says, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Now Corinth—the Corinth Church of Christ—was a congregation that had a lot of struggles. Paul had been dealing with them. We're going to see in the later chapters when we read First Corinthians that he deals with a lot of problems. Well, one of their biggest problems was they had divisions. And I want us to see how we can have unity. We saw that in the last lesson. But what does Paul say? Why are these divisions caused? Let us break down verse 10. First of all, Paul says that we are all to speak the same thing. Ephesians 4:5 says that we are to have one faith. First Peter 4:11 says, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God." If we all speak only the Bible, and always go by the Word of God, then everything will be OK. We must speak the same thing. Now this is contrary to people saying, "You believe one thing and we believe another. God accepts all faiths." God does not accept all faiths because there is only one faith—the system of faith found in the Bible. Ephesians 4:5 says there is "one faith." We must speak the same thing, that is the Word of God. Then he goes on to say, "There must be no divisions among you." Now when one claims that they are (now listen to this very carefully) in a denomination, they are already condemning themselves by claiming they are in a denomination because what they are saying is they are not the true church. They are a part of what God hates—a division. They are denominations. Paul says that there are to be no divisions. And when one claims that I am part of a division, you're already bringing condemnation upon yourself by claiming that. God is not happy with division. And it surprises me

how many people, when I talk to them, and probably you've talked to them and tried to teach them about the truth and the church, and when you are talking with them they say, "Well, you know what, you do your thing and I do my thing." That same mentality, "We'll all be right. There's many ways." There's not many ways. Matthew 7:14 says that there is one way, and it's a very narrow way that we have to follow. So, we cannot be in any denomination. That's condemned. That's a division. So the Bible says, "no divisions among you."

Galatians 5:20 goes on to condemn a dissension, which is a division. It's a work of the flesh, and it's contrary to the Bible. In Matthew 12, beginning verse 25, Jesus says that "every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand." If there's only one church, and the Lord died for that church, and we know that it can't be divided because if it is then it will not stand. In 1 Corinthians 3:3 it says, "Where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" Where there are all these divisions, are you not behaving like mere men by bringing in all these false teachings and doctrines? In 1 Corinthians 11:18 Paul says, "First of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it." So division based upon false doctrine is always condemned, based upon things that the Bible does not authorize, are always condemned. In the last part of that verse in 1 Corinthians 1:10, Paul says that we are to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Now that one mind is the mind of Christ. Philippians 1:27, Philippians 2:2, 1 Peter 3:8, and 2 Corinthians 13:11 continue to talk about we're to be of the same mind and the one mind. Now that is not following in the line of what a lot of people say. "You know, well, this is just my opinion on the matter, and I want to do this because I want to. We can't all agree. We can't all say the Bible is one. Or we can't all agree on one issue." Yes we can. The Bible commands us to. We're all to have that one mind. In Acts 4:32 it says, "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common." What did they have in common? All things when it came to relating to the spiritual, to the truth.

And then he says that we are to be of the same judgment. And many people go to Matthew 7:1 and they say, "Well, the Bible says, 'Judge not that you be not judged.'" There are many types of judgment in the Bible. There is righteous judgment, and that's what we are commanded to have. In John 7:24, and this is the one judgment we're all to be united on, righteous judgment, the Bible says, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge." How? "With righteous judgment." We are to have that righteous judgment. Matthew 7:1 talks about hypocritical judgment. You're judging one person when you're doing the exact same thing if not more sin. And he goes on to say in Matthew 7 that once you do get your life right, you are to judge with a righteous judgment and get that speck out of the person's life once you've removed your own plank. And so there is a judgment we must judge with. We are commanded to judge with righteous judgment. That is judgment based upon the Word of God. When the Bible says it, whether we agree with it or not, that's what the Bible says, that's what God says, and it's already been made a judgment, and we must follow that. We need to always go to the Bible when we're corrected, and we need to change to what the Bible says. We always need to be willing do discuss and to debate. We need to be willing to openly discuss with people our beliefs and to see what the Bible says. A lot of times people are closed on this. They don't want to. But in Acts 17:2 Paul would go into the synagogue, and he would reason with them, which is where we get our word "debate" or "argue." There's nothing wrong with a scriptural argument. And he would reason with them how? From the Scriptures. That's the difference. A lot of people today want to reason with their own opinions, but Paul would reason from the scriptures with them. And that's what we must do. We must be open to talk about what we believe and what the Bible says.

First Peter 3:15 says we always need to be ready to give a defense. I've talked to people before who claim to be very high up the ladder in the spiritual field and know the Bible. And they say, "Well, I'm just not ready to give a defense for what I believe." But we need to be able to give that defense. In Isaiah 55:8-9 we need to be reminded, "'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'" See, we need to follow the Word of God. Maybe you've heard something that is contrary to what you believe, but you realize it's the Bible. You need to obey it. Have you heard? Have you believed what the Bible has to say? Have you repented of your sins? Are you willing to change the things in your life? Have you confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord? Upon doing that, have you been baptized for the forgiveness of yours sins—not for some "better-felt-than-told" feeling or to show everybody in the world that you're saved, but to be saved by being baptized in the water? If you have not done that, we hope that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST is brought to you by loving, caring members of the church of Christ. The McLish Avenue church of Christ in Ardmore, Oklahoma, oversees this evangelistic effort. For a free CD or DVD of today's broadcast, please write to:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST
607 McLish Ave.
Ardmore, OK 73401

You may call **580-223-3289**. Please visit us on the web at www.thegospelofchrist.com. We encourage you to attend the church of Christ, where "the Bible is loved and the Gospel is preached."

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “UNITY AND DIVISION”

1. What is the message found in Psalm 133:1?
2. What is one thing, according to 1 John 4:1, that we must do to ensure unity in the Lord's church?
3. What did the Lord have to say in Matthew 15:7-9 about the people of His day?
4. About what did Peter warn first-century Christians in 2 Peter 2:1?
5. What warning did Paul give Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:20?
6. In Colossians 2:23 Paul warned the Christians in Colossae about something. What was it?
7. According to Jeremiah 6:14, what was happening in the time period during which Jeremiah was writing?
8. Of whom did Jude write in Jude 19?
9. What does Ephesians 4:14 tell us not to do?
10. According to Jeremiah 5:30-31, what was happening in the time period during which Jeremiah was writing?
11. In Acts 23:1 Paul confessed that he had “lived in all good conscience before God until this day,” even though he had hurt the Lord's church by his actions. Is it enough to have a good conscience regarding what we are doing?
12. According to Psalm 119:104, what is the standard by which we are to measure our thoughts and actions?
13. According to Proverbs 6:19 what are two things that God hates?
14. What does Proverbs 19:5 tell us that relates to Proverbs 6:19?
15. According to Romans 16:17, how are we to react to those people who cause strife and division in the Lord's church?
16. Romans 1:32 speaks of two groups of people who are condemned. What types of people compose those two groups?
17. What did Paul mean when he wrote in Philippians 2:12, “Work out your own salvation”?
18. What does 1 Corinthians 3:3 have to say about those who cause strife and division?
19. How does Acts 4:32 describe those people in the first century who composed the Lord's church?