

## Unity (2006)

### We Must Deliberately Choose To Unite

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We are going to begin this sermon with a very familiar scripture for this day. It is going to be our launching pad.

**Acts 2:1** And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

This marks this announcement by God of the official beginning of the church, and it was marked by Him with signs and wonders that drew a great deal of attention to what was going on. He had been working toward this point for a long time—in fact since Adam and Eve to be exact. I want to draw attention to the fact of the attitude in which it began. It began in unity of mind, and there is a standard for us to shoot toward, to be like it was in the first century church when it began.

This does not mean that these people were nothing more than clones of each other, but rather it draws attention to their mental state, in terms of religion, was also a wonder. I do not know there is any area of social experience in this world in which there is more division than there is in the area of religion, but this group was of one accord. They undoubtedly had differences of opinion about many things, but one thing is certain, they were all of one purpose in regard to their relationship with God.

I am going to illustrate a principle of creation that I think we should think on often in order to keep it fresh in our mind—a sense of wonder at the marvelous genius and loving character of the mind that created all things. I want this sermon to help restore a right sense of understanding when we are reminded of how insignificant, and yet responsible, we are to that Being. I hope this sermon will help bring into sharper focus what those responsibilities are so that we might be better equipped to carry them out.

This sermon began when Evelyn and I were watching an orchestra perform on television. The thought of the unity required for the orchestra to perform well impressed her, and then she mentioned it to me.

A full-fledged symphony orchestra generally has over one hundred members led by a single director. It will contain a large number and variety of stringed instruments, such a violins, cellos, bass violas, and harps, and depending on the composition they are performing, I have even seen guitars, banjos, and mandolins being used. It has woodwinds, like clarinets, saxophones, bassoons, oboes, flutes, and sometimes-even piccolos.

There are also the brasses, consisting of trombones, trumpets, and coronets. There are many drums, cymbals, and even a tinkling triangle, a xylophone, and always a piano or two. I have seen an organ at some compositions, and like with the Messiah, a harpsichord. Sometimes, as in an opera, the most beautiful of musical instruments is added. A whole cast of human voices, male and female, is added to the mixture, and at other times, as in a vocal concert, hundreds of human voices—bass, baritone, tenor, alto, soprano—complete the mix.

All of these varying parts with their multitude of sounds are woven together, entering and exiting, harmonizing and contrasting. Some sounds are subtle and flowing, and others are bombastic and pulsating as a mood is created, but all working under the direction of one person in order to bring out the fullness of the composer's creation.

Although our musical tastes may vary, we nonetheless marvel and appreciate the skill of those who perform. Nevertheless, there are times when we reflect more deeply that we appreciate the skill and the vision of the composers and the comparative skill of the director and players in producing this wonderful experience for you and me.

There may be some pieces of music we especially love to hear. We will listen to them repeatedly, and it is very likely we do not even know the names of those performing. In fact, we may not even know the name of the one directing the ensemble of skilled musicians, but we usually know who the composer is. His name may be foreign to us. He may have lived and died centuries ago. The name might be Beethoven, Brahms, Bach, or Mozart, Sibelius, Haydn, Grieg, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Verdi, or Strauss, but the name is hooked in our memory because of our pleasure in his creation.

It would have to be this way with God above all. What He has created is far more complex and magnificent in the intricacy of its design and the interaction of many, many more parts in order to bring out the awesome purpose for which He has designed and created all things. An orchestra is a clear example of something men have devised and assemble in order to produce something beautiful. At times it is stimulating, at other times soothing, but hopefully always enjoyable to some degree through a complex arrangement of cooperation.

But how does the unity of an orchestra compare to something common to all of us that God has made? How about the human body? How does an orchestra stack up against the human body?

**Psalm 139:14** I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are your works; and that my soul knows right well.

Let me give that to you out of the *Living Bible*. It is really interesting, David says to God, "Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex. It is amazing to think about." And it is. How did David know that? As far as we know, he did not have any microscopes, and there were not detailed autopsies made on cadavers at that time with every little part examined. But David was close enough to God he did not need that. All he needed to do was to look at the outside, to think about his eyes, his ears, his hair, and to think about the skill there was in his fingers to know that everything was emanating from his brain. Therefore, without even seeing it, he must have known, "Wow! What a mind I have, and it was all designed and put together by my God, my Father in heaven."

There is another interesting thought on this that is expressed by Paul in Ephesians 5:29 in this teaching instruction about men's relationship with God and the church.

**Ephesians 5:29** For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church.

Yes, we love ourselves, and in some way we are very familiar with ourselves, with our body. We look at it or some part of it with some degree of concern virtually every day. We might not like what we see, and are therefore constantly seeking to change it in some way. Then again, we may very

much like what it looks like, and we fight a constant battle to keep it from degenerating. It goes from one extreme or the other. Let me ask you this: How often have you even contemplated its unity of operations?

DNA is something that is very much in the news these days. Are you aware that when you look at yourself in the mirror that you see only a tiny portion of the around 100 trillion cells that make up your body and keep it working? I did not say one million, one billion, or even 100 billion; I said 100 **trillion**. That is an impressive number, especially when compared to the only 100 or so musicians that are working in harmony in a symphony orchestra, or eleven men on a football team, or 5 men on a basketball team. Can you even grasp how large **one** trillion is?

A second is something that we are familiar with. It is nice and small. There are 60 seconds in one minute. There are 3,600 seconds in one hour. One day consists of 86,400 seconds. In a week there are 604,800 seconds. There are 31 million 536 thousand seconds in one 365-day year. We are not even to one trillion yet, and one year has gone by.

The next figures I give are close approximation. There are 4 years 10 months and 14 days in one billion seconds. In other words, one billion seconds ago it was August of 2001. A trillion is 1,000 billion, and since it takes one billion seconds to complete 4.9 years, one trillion seconds thus fills 4,900 years. Therefore, one trillion seconds ago—as small as a second is—is so large that one has to go back in time 4,900 years, and it takes us approximately 1,900 years before Christ was born, a bit over 2,000 years ago.

One trillion seconds takes us all the way back beyond Israel and Judah going into captivity, David and Solomon's reign, Israel leaving their Egyptian slavery, Moses' birth, Joseph's birth, Jacob's birth, all the way back to the time of Genesis 11 when Abraham, the father of the Israelitish people, was born. That is only one trillion seconds. One hundred trillion seconds ago is incomprehensible. It is 490 quadrillion years ago.

Your body is made up of 100 trillion cells working together in wonderful harmony to support and protect your life. In one narrow sense, all cells are exactly alike. You might imagine them somewhat like a balloon filled with a liquid having a blob of material in the center called a nucleus. But from this point on cells are very much different and exceedingly complex in order that they perform the function intended by the Creator.

In like manner, many instruments in an orchestra share a similarity in order to produce vibrations we hear when air is blown into them or through them. For example, trumpets, trombones, coronets, clarinets, saxophones, oboes, bassoons, piccolos, and flutes are all wind instruments, but each one not only looks different, each produces a wide variety of different sounds.

Though the DNA makes cells to differ from one another, or in some cases similar to one another, the DNA makes each person physically the same. At the same time it makes each one of us individually physically different from every other person who has ever lived or who ever will live. Did you hear what I said? No exact duplicate like you ever lived or ever will live. That is how many possible combinations there are in the DNA. This is because of the very large number of DNA combinations possible within what God has created.

I will tell you something that was amazing. Evelyn and I were watching that NCIS (National Criminal Intelligence Service) one time, and they are always delving into the DNA. One time,

believe it or not, they solved a crime by delving into the DNA of a sycamore tree. Do you know what that person said about the sycamore tree? Every sycamore tree in the world is unique. Let that sink in. If sycamore trees are all different even though they look the same to you and me, it also gives us the implication that every oak tree is different, and that every pine tree is different, and on and on and on. That is the kind of mind we are dealing with.

When God designed things, He did not fool around. Mankind has no excuse. We are unique. Every part of our body is working in harmony in order to make sure that what He has created in you continues right on out for all eternity. Every one of His children will have the same character, but every one will be different, too. What a family! I would have to think that all the angels are different, too. What a mind!

It might be surprising for you to know that every human who has lived shares 98% of the same DNA as a chimpanzee. No, we are not related.

Now let this one rattle around for a little bit. Do you know that all humans who have ever lived or who ever will live share exactly the same DNA in 99.9% of the cases? That is how closely related we are, and yet we are all unique. All of these huge numbers of combinations possible are made up in that last one-tenth of one percent. That would make 100 percent. What a mathematician we are dealing with!

In the nucleus of each cell are 46 chromosomes—23 from the father and 23 from the mother. The DNA resides in the chromosomes, and holds our particular genetic code that physically makes us the individual we are. The smallest chromosome contains 231 genes; the largest 2,968.

DNA is shaped like a double helix. A helix is a spiral form. A double helix means there are two of them spiraling together. They are constructed very much like a ladder—the kind of thing that you and I lean against the house. The side rails have rungs going between them. That is the way it is with DNA, only it is spiraling rather than going straight, and there are rungs that go back and forth between the spirals.

There are 3 billion rungs in this spiral-shaped ladder, and herein is contained all the combinations that make each of us physically unique. Each rung consists of four basic chemicals that are the road map for producing protein. These four chemicals, called Base Pair, are capable of an incredible number of combinations. These chemicals produce the genes, and so each one of us has about 30 thousand genes. Each gene consists of a large number of combinations of these chemical bases. The average gene consists of 3 thousand bases, but the largest contains 2million bases. It is the sequence—the order of the arrangements of the DNA—that makes each one of us unique, and nobody's DNA is exactly like anybody else's.

These cells are created with the potential of all of these combinations, and it is so interesting that any cell that is produced can only work in one place in the body. We are now getting to the point of this whole expanded math lesson. If the cell construction makes it skin, it will serve somewhere in the skin. If that cell should somehow wander into the eye, the eye will kill it. It does not belong there. The same is true for every other portion of the body. So there is a harmony, cooperation within the body that makes sure that every cell gets put in the right place, and there it performs its function.

Making these discoveries has been possible only with the aid of a powerful microscope and the computer for keeping track of what has been discovered. I am not aiming for you to remember any of

these numbers I have given. I have only given them to you in order for you to be impressed by the incredible gap there is between the accomplishments of God (as demonstrated in just this one area of His creation) compared with our puny efforts even in producing a symphony orchestra. Man begins with already-existing parts God created everything from scratch.

Brethren, even mankind, at its very best, compared to God, has not even advanced to the sand pile yet. We are only crawling toward it, and yet, how incredibly proud we are of our accomplishments. Can you begin to see maybe just the beginning edges of why God holds man as being without excuse before His judgment because he has suppressed the knowledge of God's creation? In the case of the tremendously complex design, that is not accidental, God led us to understand these things in order to make it available to His church at the very end time. It is really a witness that is both for and against us because we, of all people, are most responsible. The apostle Paul provided us with an analogy using this very design feature that would be helpful to our spiritual well being.

**Ephesians 1:15-17** Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

You received a little bit of that today—just a tiny speck of His mind and how awesome it is expressed in His creation. That little bit of knowledge should impress us. That is our Dad who did those things.

**Ephesians 1:18-23** The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

God has appointed the resurrected Christ to be the Head, the Director of all things for the benefit of the church. He portrays Christ as the Head of a human body with those of us filling out and making whole the rest of His body now being formed, like an orchestra, for the purpose of producing certain things. It is as though we are individual cells in Christ's body, thus forming the rest of it.

If you will recall, in other contexts, Paul compared the church to a building of which we are part, and Jesus Christ is Chief Cornerstone. In other places he designates us as members of a household—the family of God. In another place we are the Bride of Christ. In another place the church is like the Roman Empire, having a great central authority with its people scattered throughout all the world, and officers who govern the empire.

In John 15, Christ compares the church to a vine and its branches. In all of these analogies there is one commonality. Every one of them shows a cooperative connectedness.

It is my personal feeling that of all the comparisons of this nature within God's word which show organization, intimate personal responsibility, and above all closeness of relationship to our Lord and Savior, the most sublime of all is the one showing us as functioning parts of Christ's own body.

As we just saw in the DNA illustration, a single human being's body is a marvelous creation, far more intricately designed and complex than an orchestra. It consists of far more individual parts than an orchestra, and it is able to bring forth far more than merely producing music.

Is it possible for us to begin to grasp and appreciate the breath-taking design, complexity, and purpose of the *spiritual* body that is His family and government, which God has been creating for at least six thousand years now? Each person made a part of that body brings with him all of the complexity that makes him a person, and God has to somehow blend this human complexity into the body that is becoming His family kingdom. That is a marvelous accomplishment all in itself.

Are we able to grasp the beginning edges of the mighty power that begins to become available to us? When we become a part of Christ's body, this power enables us to live a Christian life, overcoming sin and carrying out His will.

Now consider this: In the human body, all power ultimately comes from the head where the brain is located. It is the head, through the thinking processes, that directs and empowers every other part of the body to function.

Here was Paul's prayer for you and me.

**Ephesians 1:17-18** That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

Paul prays that God would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, coupled with enlightenment of the hope of our calling. God has already fulfilled that to some degree. Even now I think I am being used to add to this, and each Sabbath a little bit more of Paul's desire here for you and me is revealed.

I want to go back to John 17 to read one verse there, and then come right back to Ephesians again. John 17:3 is one of those verses that has to be in our mind almost constantly. Jesus is going to give a definition of eternal life.

**John 17:3** And this *is* life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

This "know" is not merely being aware of Him. It is not merely being aware of His ability to create fantastic physical things. This knowing involves a knowledge that is intimately connected to living with Him and for Him. In a different context, if it involves a man and a woman, it would go all the way to intercourse—that kind of intimacy.

Eternal life is the result of an intimacy with God. That is how it is developed. That is what the product of an intimate relationship with God is. It is eternal life. I think that most of you understand

that when Jesus speaks of eternal life in this manner, He is not talking about *everlasting* life, but rather He is talking about a *quality* of life. It is the way God lives eternally.

In order for us to be in the Kingdom of God, we have to begin practicing living our lives like He does. We cannot do that unless we have a relationship with Him, and that this relationship is intimate. From that relationship we begin to accumulate, to pile up knowledge of Him, even things like what I just went through here. But far more extensively and far more importantly is how to live. This does give us an appreciation for the quality and the capacity of the kind of mind we are dealing with, and that can be very humbling.

We are so dumb compared to Him. If we have the right approach to Him, we are going to be humbled before Him, and He responds to those who are humble. We are really like little children, soaking things up from Him. In that attitude He will graciously and generously give us the things we need to continue that relationship.

Jesus said that eternal life is to know God, and that His purpose is to bring all of us into oneness with Him. At this particular place in Ephesians, Paul wants us to know that since we are part of Christ's body, we can be energized by the very power of Jesus Christ for the purpose of conforming to God's will.

**Ephesians 1:19** And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe according to the working of his mighty power.

Paul is beginning to draw our attention to the power that is available to us to conform to the image of God. In verse 20, Paul uses the illustration of Christ's resurrection to show how great God's power to live is. It is so great that He can make a dead person live, as if the person did not die; and not only as if the person did not die, the person is completely and totally transformed to spirit.

Pentecost is about power—the power to fulfill our responsibilities as one of the first fruits of God. That power can come from God. He is willing to give it because His purpose can be the same as our purpose if our purpose is that we want to be at one with Him, of one accord with Him. He is very willing to give whatever it takes for us to be able to live the way He does.

**I Corinthians 12:12-18** For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now has God set the members every one of them in the body as it has pleased him.

This is exactly what He has done in the human body. He set every part as it pleased Him. Paul is saying here God is doing exactly the same thing with the body of Jesus Christ. He designed it. He knows the end toward which He is headed, and He is calling people individually and purposefully to fill one responsibility within the body.

I am going to read these same verses from the *Revised English Bible*, beginning in verse 12.

**I Corinthians 12:12-18** [*Revised English Bible*] Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs which, many as they are, together make up one body. For in one spirit we are all baptized or brought into one body by baptism. Whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, we were all given that one spirit to drink. [This is what is making us one. It is that one spirit.] A body is not a single organ, but many. Suppose the foot were to say, Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body, it belongs to the body nonetheless. Suppose the ear were to say, Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body, it still belongs to the body. If the body were all eyes, how would it hear? If the body were all ears, how would it smell? But in fact, God appointed each limb and organ to its own place in the body as He chose.

Paul's illustration here is given partly to evoke admiration of the church's Composer, but even more so to evoke understanding that we have all been purposely made part of Christ's spiritual body and arranged as He sees fit. This illustration is to awaken a sense of responsibility and obligation to respond to its Director—Christ.

There are a number of differences between the church as a family team being formed and an orchestra. These differences create difficulties to achieving the oneness that God desires. Here are a couple of differences: (1) The members of the spiritual body are not confined to one single small area as is an orchestra; rather they are spread here and there over the entirety of the earth.

Not only is their location not centralized, but also this group is not all of the same race or culture. Its members do not all speak the same language, thus creating communicating difficulties. Perhaps most important of all, none of us is a professional at what we have been called to do by the Director. Every one of us starts out brand new, and you know how a person acts who is brand new to a job. He is all thumbs and does not know which way to turn.

Have you ever been a child of God before He called you? No. No. No. We all start at ground zero learning to be a son of God, but you see, we all do have the same spirit. We all have the same God. We have the same Savior and the same hope. We are all drawn to live the same way of life, and we are all part of the same body.

Now why did I draw your attention to Paul's prayer, that God would give us the spirit of wisdom, and revelation, and the knowledge of Him, and enlightenment regarding our hope? There is a similarity between the church and an orchestra that presents huge potential difficulties that must be overcome. Here is a similarity: As with an orchestra, each part of the spiritual body of Christ must respond to the Director or the Head when commands are given in order that the Composer's desires be met.

Unlike the human body in which each part automatically and selflessly performs the function it is designed to do, the members of an orchestra, or the church, have a nature that effortlessly malfunctions because of weakness, or even deliberate, stubborn resistance, thus going its own way, doing its own thing. Brethren, you know very well we all hit a lot of sour notes.

When we think about the physical complexity of our body, and then add to that the psychological complexion and complexity of our mind and our character, God has to be a genius to deal with this. He has to have awesome character to not get completely frustrated and impatient with us.

When I was in fifth or sixth grade I was trying to learn how to play the clarinet, and all I got was a lot of squeaks and squeals. I filled that long tube with spit. I was constantly embarrassed because this

girl playing the saxophone beside me was so good. I gave up. My excuse was, "I don't have a bit of musical talent," and that is not true. But I would have rather caught a ball, or kicked a football, or done something like that, and so that is what I did. God has to deal with people all the time who feel like that.

He puts us into Jesus Christ to perform a function within that body, but we would rather do something else. It is necessary for someone like the apostle Paul to make a prayer, appealing to God that somehow He will open up our minds to understand the seriousness and the wonder of what is going on so that somehow or another we learn to cooperate. This is our major failing.

We have a nature that is at enmity against God, and we, by nature, unlike the cells of our body, do not want to cooperate. It is not first nature with us, and God has a major job overcoming that. One of His big problems is bringing us to the place where we will willingly cooperate. When that occurs we can start growing by leaps and bounds, drawing on the power that He is willing to give us to cooperate ever more.

Will we ever reach it? No, brethren, we will not reach that perfection as the apostle Paul shows us in Romans 7. Twenty years after being an apostle he said that sin was still in him, and he finished up by saying, "O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" It ends on a positive note because he said he knew that Jesus Christ would, because He will not give up. It is so helpful when we do cooperate. That is our responsibility.

Let us go back to Ephesians again. I think most of us understand that the overall subject of Ephesians is unity. One of the things that this means in a practical way is that whatever Paul wrote in the whole of the epistle must be researched into, thought about, meditated upon, and applied from the perspective of that subject.

**Ephesians 1:11-12** In whom [in Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his [the Father] own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

From the earliest verse in chapter 1, God shows that His whole purpose was premeditated upon His creating a glorious family redeemed from the earth through Jesus Christ, and that this family would be at one with Him. Recall that this is written to people like us who are becoming acutely aware of their weaknesses. At the same time they were becoming ever more knowledgeable of their responsibility to quit sinning, thus being anything but at one with the Father and the Son. As Paul moves through the book of Ephesians he broaches the major cause producing the disunity within the congregation.

Let us go back again and familiarize ourselves just ever so briefly with Psalm 133.

**Psalm 133:1-3** Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Now back to Ephesians 2:2. Remember that the subject here is unity.

**Ephesians 2:2** Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

A couple of weeks ago I briefly touched on the subject of unity in the connection with Psalm 133. In that Psalm God intimates, He implies very strongly, that unity is readily available, as readily as the dew of Hermon. Incidentally, the amount of dew that fell there was legendary amongst the Israelitish people. They got very little rain, but almost every morning there was very heavy dew on the ground—so much so that they could shepherd their sheep and goats on those mountains. They did not even need water because the grass was so wet every morning. The psalmist used that as an illustration that unity is as available as the dew of Hermon, but that availability does not eliminate the cause of disunity. As I mentioned at the time, the cause of disunity is sin, and I mentioned specifically such qualities as pride, fear, rivalry, cruelty, and lust. In other words, forms of self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness.

Brethren, the cause of disunity, whether in marriage or in the church, is that we have been trained, thoroughly schooled, in rebellion against God and unity with Him. This is because we have been following the course of this world that is governed and generated by the prince of the power of the air. Notice in Ephesians 2:2 Paul inserts the word "power." He had just mentioned it twice in verse 19, and so here, just three or four verses later, he mentions power once again.

In Ephesians 1:19 it was a *positive* power, and in Ephesians 2:2 it is a *negative* and rebellious power, and therefore different from the earlier one. The power mentioned in Ephesians 2:2 has worked in us in the past to produce what we were before conversion, and we drew upon it without even realizing we were doing it. But now, you see, a new power has entered into our life, and by so doing it has created a multitude of choices we never had before. We must consciously draw upon the new power that has come into our life in order to maintain the oneness God established by His calling.

The power of the prince of the air arises in us effortlessly, but we must deliberately choose to use the power God makes available to us, and that is not always easy. But deliberately choosing to harmonize and cooperate with God is what is going to produce the oneness with God. Now let me reassure you again. Will God help us to make those choices? The answer is yes, because that is the very goal He is pursuing as well. He is so willing to give us whatever it takes for us to be like Him and His son Jesus Christ. This is why Paul said that power is available. This is why this is so important to us regarding unity. It is because the level of unity God is creating is entirely dependent on the quality of our relationship with Him. This is why access to Him through Jesus Christ is so important.

When Adam and Eve sinned and were expelled from the garden, the relationship with God ended. It ended any hope for unity with other humans in terms of God's purpose. If they had chosen to eat of the Tree of Life, the relationship with God would have continued, and God's purpose completed. However, they rebelled, aided by Satan's deception, and they drew upon the power of the prince of the power of the air.

**Genesis 11:6** And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

I reference this verse really for only one reason. It is to draw a principle from it. Men can develop multiple forms of unity in which they may cooperate with one another marvelously to produce whatever it is they want to produce. For instance, they can form teams like in basketball or football, and they cooperate marvelously using their athletic skills to produce something that is very entertaining for us.

Men can unite to build a building, or to create a government and so forth, as long as they agree as to their purpose and the way they are to achieve that purpose. In carnality, men can unify and produce marvelous things, and so a principle begins to arise, that this unity is achieved through commonality and agreement as to how to reach the goal. Why then do we still have wars? In one way, the answer is simple. We cannot all agree on the goal because of self-interest. Nor can we agree on how the goal is to be accomplished. This points out why the oneness with God must precede any human unity.

Let us go to Amos 3. Remember these principles that are coming up. Men can produce unity wonderfully, but where is it headed, and how is it going to get there? How pure is the unity and the cooperative effort between those people? What has human unity produced on earth, brethren? We just read in Genesis 11 that it got them blown off the earth. You might say God blew it away because it was not in harmony with His purpose.

Here in the book of Amos is another one of those scriptures that every one of us has in our spiritual memory bank.

**Amos 3:3** Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Unfortunately, this translation, as piquant as it seems, is somewhat misleading. The more accurate translation seems to be: "Can two keep an appointment unless they agree?" There is quite a difference between the two. The one given in the *King James* gives the impression that unity is impossible unless there is perfect agreement. You might have to think about that for a little while, because what that seems to call for is uniformity. This is why I went extensively to show us how different we are. How can we possibly be uniform? But that translation in the *King James* seems to infer this is what is required. No, God does not require uniformity.

The second translation does not demand that stringent a standard. It seems to require a basic starting point from which a walk begins, and by implication, continues to a goal meeting and overcoming whatever challenges arise. That one, brethren, is correct, because that is exactly the way life is. That is the way it has to be in our relationship with God. We come into agreement with Him through Jesus Christ, but it is only a starting point. We then start walking toward the goal, hopefully hand in hand with Jesus Christ, and side by side with all of our brethren in the church. Along the way we are going to meet an awful lot of challenges, but each and every one of us has to cooperate with God first. If we cooperate with Him, the cooperation between us increases and we become tighter and tighter.

We are in no way intended by God to be uniform in anything except character. We have to have uniformity in agreement as to where we are headed and how we are going to get there, but individually and personally, God does not require that we just be clones of one another. Sometimes, brethren, because we are not clones of one another, we offend each other. We rub people the wrong way, and a challenge to the unity erupts.

If we are drawing upon the power of God, that challenge will be overcome. Both sides or both parties within the challenge have to agree, first within themselves and in relation to God that they are going to solve it. Sometimes the solution might be somewhat costly, and there will be times when the solution cannot be arrived at very easily. Do you know what the apostle Paul said? You can read it for yourself in I Corinthians 6:7. He said, "Why don't you just give up? Why do you not suffer loss?" That is what Christ did. He suffered the loss of His life in order to produce unity with all of mankind eventually. No, brethren, we cannot expect the church ever to be perfect. It is totally unrealistic to expect anything like that.

**Galatians 5:14-17** For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another. [That can be a sobering verse because he is saying that if you keep on fighting, you both may lose.] This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other so that you cannot do the things that you would.

There cannot be unity if people bite and devour one another through competition, pride, rivalry, envy, or lust. That is what the world does. It is interesting that the attitude described in verse 15 is the very opposite of the one described in verse 14. The one in verse 14 unites, and the other divides. It is for this very reason that Paul says in verse 17 that we cannot—meaning *must* not—permit ourselves to sin, and divide.

The power that divides is derived from the prince of the power of the air, and human nature is very comfortable with it. Human nature must be squelched within each of us individually and consciously. Therein lies our responsibility to God. We must consciously choose not only to be patient and to bear with each other, but also to make ourselves *do* kind and serving things for each other.

I once read of a man's description of Christian life being like a bridge crossing at a point where two streams meet. The one stream, he said, is legalism, the other is libertinism. The Christian must be very careful to maintain his balance and not fall into either stream, because both are sin, and both produce disunity. Now the power to maintain that balance is contained within the relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

A principle shown in many parts of scripture is that what God requires, God also supplies what enables us to do the requirement. Let me illustrate this God required that Israel walk across the wilderness. They were going to be walking. They could not be farming. They could not be shepherding their animals or whatever, so where was the food going to come from that would keep them walking? Since God required it, God supplied it. He gave them manna to eat. He brought water out of the rock. So you see, from that arises a Christian understanding, and that is whatever God requires we do in order to reach the goal He set before us, He will enable by giving us what we need. Do you see what that does? If we believe God, it leaves us without excuse.

Now Israel had to do something. God gave them the manna every morning, but they still had to expend effort to gather it. In addition to that, each day they had to follow the Cloud wherever it went, because it kept moving except when He stopped for a good period of time.

What happened to those folks who decided, "I am not going to go out and gather it anymore," or they may have decided, "I am going to go out and gather some manna this morning, but I refuse to follow that Cloud one step further"? They died. Can you expand on that principle yourself? God will provide the power, but we have to continue to follow the Cloud in order for it to be used properly. That unifies us with God because we are all moving in the same direction. We are using the power to follow in that direction, and as we go, we are being united as a result with those who are walking with us. These are simple principles, but we have to have faith in them. We have to believe them, and we have to do them.

This is something we have to keep in mind.

**Ephesians 4:7** But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

God did not make every cell in the body exactly the same. They have the same general structure, but as I said earlier, if a skin cell goes into the eye, it is useless there and it is disposed of. A skin cell is not equipped in the same way that God has equipped an eye cell. The same principle is true in the church. Everybody is not gifted in exactly the same way. There are some things that all of us are equipped by God to do. There are some responsibilities within the church, which a certain part of the body is especially equipped to carry out. One of those is the ministry. It does not make the ministry better. It does not make the ministry more valuable. It does make the ministry more responsible; to make sure the minister is not doing somebody else's job and get booted out.

**Ephesians 4:1** I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

Moses must have preached something like that to the Israelites as they were going across the wilderness, "Follow the Cloud!" This is something all of us are equipped to do.

**Ephesians 4:2-5** With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you 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.

Our personal relationship with the Head is what enables us to be at one with each other. In like manner, before conversion, our relationship with the ruler of this world enabled us to be like the world, and to be like him. Now through Christ, that relationship has been severed, and so we have to struggle to keep the relationship with God going.

Notice how positive this verse is.

**Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

Paul did not mean that he could create an atomic bomb. Those kinds of things are not included in "the all things." He simply meant, "I can do everything that God requires of me for my part in the body."

**Philippians 4:19** But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Brethren, we cannot come up with one legitimate excuse for not doing what is required of us, because our God will supply all of our needs. We are part of His body, and He is going to feed it. He has an awesome mind that can send every bit of understanding and energy needed to do whatever He requires.

Like the notes on a sheet of music, the most important desires of the director are already written so that each member is without excuse regarding the use of his gift. Unity in following the director's leading is the responsibility of each part. This is the only way that beautiful music can be produced.

An orchestra is a clear example of something man devises, assembles, and works sacrificially at perfecting in order to produce something beautiful, sometimes stimulating, other times soothing, but also always profitably enjoyable to some degree through a complex arrangement of teamwork. Can we do anything less? Can we not find whatever is needed in our relationship with God in cooperating with His purpose, and with each other?