

## Unity And Unleavened Bread

Unity is produced within one's relationship with God

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Given 26-Apr-08; Sermon #879B

We will begin this sermon by turning to John 17, and we will build the sermon on the prayer of Jesus Christ.

**John 17:11** And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one, as we are.

**John 17:20-23** Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word [That is, through the Bible, through their preaching]; That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me. And the glory which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me.

The subject here is obviously oneness or unity. This aspect of Christianity is so important that it occupies 20% of this final prayer of our Savior. The unity God desires cannot be externally imposed, and thus it is each person's responsibility to create unity through his own efforts from within his relationship with God.

The standard is that we be one with the Father and with the Son as *They* are with each other. That is a very significant level of unity. Complicating things, as we shall see as we move along here, is that if we are disconnected from others in the body of Christ apart from the Father and Son, our oneness with them suffers too. We cannot have one without the other. We have got to have them both together: oneness.

In thought, let us go back to the beginning of the Bible and consider Adam and Eve for just a moment. I want to do this because one of the things that are so impressive to me in this event is how easily and quickly these two apparently put God and their relationship with Him out of mind.

They lived in an environment specifically created for them by their Creator. It was idyllic and gorgeous to look at, and it supplied them with every physical need for sustaining

life. Not only that, they had a wonderful neighbor—their Creator. He walked in, and He worked in the Garden with them. His work was *them*. He was their teacher and counselor.

Jewish belief is that this peaceful relationship may have lasted as much as seven years—certainly a long enough period to receive a great deal of instruction and seemingly cement a strong relationship. But then another being moved into the community, with a different perspective, and the neighborhood changed immediately. He gave them a different perspective from that of their Creator. Adam and Eve accepted it and followed what he cunningly suggested, and immediately the unity of the Garden was shattered, and they found themselves on the outside looking in.

Their submission to Satan proved that they no longer agreed with the Creator, and thus they no longer walked with Him. In fact, they were on entirely different paths that led to death, and possibly *eternal* separation from Him.

One of the things we can learn from this example is that all of that gorgeous beauty God abundantly supplied, and even having some measure of personal contact with Him, was not enough to keep them from separating themselves from Him when something stimulating to their minds attracted them. Something was missing from their relationship with Him that allowed them to overlook Him so quickly and easily.

One of the more vivid and consistent themes that threads its way through the Scriptures is that even though God establishes a relationship with people, they have a difficult time upholding their side of the fellowship with Him and with others within the same fellowship.

The Bible and personal experience reveal that we are so unstable and inconsiderate, so self-centered, it is a wondrous marvel that God continually opens Himself to more careless abuse from us. By comparison to Him, we are so untrustworthy, and our faithlessness is phenomenal.

**Isaiah 59:1-3** Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness.

This faithlessness that I mentioned a few minutes ago is expressed in our relationship

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with what the Bible, using an abbreviated term, calls "sin" or "iniquity." Sin though, in a longer definition, is "deviating from a path, or a way." It is also "missing the mark"—the failure to live up to a standard, falling short of what was agreed to in a covenant with Him. The sin—"deviation"—produces separation, a division. That is what these three verses tell us. That is foundational. Sin produces separation from those we should not want to be separated from in any way, shape, or form.

We are going to go back to the New Testament for a brief period. We are going to go to I Corinthians 6, and we will be in and out of I Corinthians quite a number of times.

**I Corinthians 6:9-11** Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

These verses are describing a past conduct of a typical congregation. The world and all of its unity-destroying attitudes and actions has its fingerprints all over us. Despite this, because of God's visionary grace, we have been figuratively invited into Eden.

It is apparent that some in the Corinthian congregation considered Christianity as being merely a system of doctrine rather than a rule of life. This is why this was a badly divided congregation, as Paul notes in I Corinthians 11:18. "I hear there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it," he said.

Unity is a condition each person is personally responsible for helping to create. It cannot be forced on a person, and even God restrains Himself from doing that because it has to result from a free moral agent who chooses to do what produces unity. This is why individual sins are critical to this issue. This is why Paul warns by saying, "Do not be deceived." Paul was putting the Corinthians on notice telling them that no Christian who consistently allows himself to indulge in a sin can be in the Kingdom of God, because that person will not be united with God anymore than Adam and Eve were, and neither will they be united with the brethren.

Do not forget Isaiah 59:1-3. That is a powerful biblical principle. Sin separates.

This particular congregation was rife with disunity because sin was so common within it.

It did not necessarily matter whether the sins were committed against fellow members, because sin will produce disunity regardless of where or against whom it is committed. You see, where sin is concerned, God Himself is never out of the picture. This is so important to learn. Sin is a deviation from a standard of conduct, and at the same time it is disloyalty toward God and other people because it always produces disunity. Was it not the sins of idolatry and Sabbath-breaking that divided Israel from God? Ezekiel 20 makes that awfully clear. How quickly sin divided Ananias and Sapphira from their life. God did that as a witness to the church.

The level of disunity each of us perceives in the news that we hear in this incredibly imperfect world ought to serve as a sobering reminder to us that the world is the very environment we all have been called from. Disunity is the *norm* for this world. It is everywhere. It seems many times like the only unity that the world is able to achieve is in doing evil. Sometimes there is a unity in doing good, and that is good, but it is pretty rare when that occurs.

The formation of our character, of our perspectives and attitudes, has not been in the peaceable unity of Eden. Because of this, our challenge in this area in Christian life is formidable. The seeds of disunity are everywhere within us. It is something that we have to be constantly aware of, and I believe that much of the time we are simply ignorant of the effects of the things that we do. If we are ignorant of it, it is because we really do not understand the all-pervasive effectiveness of sin and how it always produces disunity.

But it does. It is only because it divides us from God. Do you know why that is important? It is because of what Richard spoke about in his message this morning, and eventually I will get to this too. The enablement for overcoming sin, the enablement for producing unity, is in the relationship with Jesus Christ. We will see that as we go along.

From the time of I Corinthians, and the time before that of the Garden of Eden, we are going to go to Numbers 16. This took place in the wilderness, and it is an event that is well-known to us.

**Numbers 16:31-33** And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

In the overall history of the world it almost seems as though as soon as there was more than one person, differences of opinions arose, along with an edgy antagonism toward God. The failure to be unified played a huge role in so many things that went badly for Israel in the wilderness. The covenant between God and Israel showed such wonderful promise, but disunity between each other, and especially against God, produced chaos at times. The results were so disastrous that one can easily conclude that when the forty years were expired, only two families of out of perhaps 2 to 3 million people were "one with God."

That is quite a witness of staggering statistics that God presents us so that we seriously think about what in the world went wrong in the wilderness. Well, in a way, things went exactly as God thought they would. He was not surprised, because at the time He was not trying to save those people. That is a witness to you and me so that we are humbled by what we have been given.

The central issue in this sermon is found in the answer to this question. Why did God do what He did to Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their households and those others that sided with them? I am going to give you a simple answer. It was because they would not submit to Him any more than Adam and Eve did. They blamed Moses and Aaron and took out their differences on them. But as God saw it, Moses and Aaron were in reality merely a surface issue. The problem was what these people had with *Him*, with God.

I want to go to John 13 because I want you to see something that Jesus said. This is a very important principle.

**John 13:20** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receives whomsoever I send receives me; and he that receives me receives him that sent me.

You can already see a drift in my thinking here. God sent Moses and Aaron. What were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram doing? They were rejecting the one that God sent.

Do you understand? Their disunity, their rejection of Moses and Aaron reverberated all the way up the chain—up to Jesus Christ, up to God the Father. Why? Because the Father and Son are one. You reject one, you reject both of Them. In this governmental sense at least, they cannot be separated from one another because Their minds are so akin to one another. It is as though it is two minds in exactly the same channel of thinking, the same attitude, the same perspective. Even though they are different Beings, their oneness is so tight that to reject one is to reject the other. So when Moses and Aaron were rejected, so were the Father and the Son.

Let me throw you something. We must not forget that Paul wrote that God places everybody in the body as it pleases Him. God does not place just the apostle, nor the evangelist, nor the pastor, nor the teacher, nor the deacon, or whatever in the body. He places everybody in the body where He wants them to fulfill a responsibility to the body and to Him. Do you get the drift of my thinking here? When we begin to reject those who are, we will say, on the same level as we are, that reverberates all the way up to the Father. I will give you more proof of this as we go along.

God does not just set the authority figures within the church. It is everybody, Paul said. He places them in the body as it pleases Him. Simple proof here. We are God's creation. The church is His creation, and as the Creator He is the One who is pulling the strings, and pushing the nozzles and everything so that it functions the way He wants it to function according to His creative purpose.

We are going to go back again to Numbers 16 again.

**Numbers 16:2-4** And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, You take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift you up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face:

Their anti-God spirituality was so focused, that while they had their anger centered on Moses, they appeared to be entirely ignorant of the fact that it was God they were rejecting, as well as Moses. They were not about to allow the sovereign God to govern His people because they did not really see God through eyes of faith. What is interesting to me is that those three men apparently did not consider God's involvement at all. How quickly Adam and Eve forgot God. Now with Dathan, Korah, and Abiram, the same thing. For some reason God was simply not a part of their thinking. This sounds exactly like David describes in Psalm 10.

**Psalm 10:4** The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

The problem here in these people I have used as examples was a lack of faith combined with a lack of awareness of God. This awareness thing is important because

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a person can sincerely believe in a Creator God, but if he is not really a part of what God is creating, it is very likely that this person is not going to be aware of God as actually personally, intimately working in his life.

A person in whom God is really truly working in and through, and really does have a living saving faith in Him, is going to be aware of God. He is not going to be like the person David described in Psalm 10:4. God is very *real* to him. To him God is a living Being he talks with in intimate terms, and believes God is working in his life night and day. He is aware, but not afraid, that God is watching over his life very, very closely.

We are going to bring this subject down to a smaller scope, and at the same time begin to build on Jesus' separation there. Richard spent a great deal of time this morning on John 15:5 where Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing." God—Jesus Christ—is the vine, and we are mere branches, and the enablement for the branches to produce fruit, including unity, comes only as a result of the union with the vine.

I do not see how that can be made any clearer. We do not produce the fruit unless we are attached to the vine, and unity is one of the most important fruits God is looking for. The enablement to produce unity in our lives with the Father and the Son, and with each other, is going to be a result of the quality of the relationship we have with our Savior.

I Corinthians is especially a helpful epistle on this subject, first of all because it is timely. It was written just before Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. In addition to that, much of its instruction within touches on the causes of disunity, and it also gives the major solution as well. We are going to go to I Corinthians 12 and begin to lay the foundation for this part of the sermon.

**I Corinthians 12:12** 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.

**I Corinthians 12:24-25** For our comely parts have no need: but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

We are getting a standard here, and we are also seeing who is setting the standard. It is the Father.

**I Corinthians 12:26** And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer

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with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

There is good reason why God uses the human body as a type of His church. Christ is the Head of this spiritual body, and those being created in the image of Jesus Christ fill out the body's remaining parts. Now consider a simple analogy. If any part of our body, whether eye, ear, gall bladder, kidney, liver, arm, hand, or foot is not functioning in harmony with the rest of the body, it pains. Think of yourself. It pains. It weakens. And depending on which part of the body is out of sorts, it renders the body less effective and efficient. You all know that is true, and is part of the reason God uses this analogy.

What is God's real concern? Is it the pain or the discomfort that we feel? No. He is concerned about His spiritual body, and so He uses the human body as an example of the kind of unity He is aiming for in our relationships with one another and with Him. The major difference between the church and the human body is that each part of the human body responds automatically as it is programmed by God to function; however, each member in the church must deliberately choose to function in the right way according to love and wisdom.

In the past few moments I have given two requirements for producing unity. The first is that we must be able to see God through eyes of an "aware-of-Him" faith. This is a rare faith in this world. The second is that we must deliberately choose to function as a son of God in the right way according to love and wisdom. Those two aspects are definitely needed. Both of these are part of God's creative process requiring time for them to be developed. They do not just suddenly appear full grown overnight in a child of God.

Remember Richard's sermon. These things have to be worked with in order for them to be produced, and the work is our relationship with God. Both of those are essential to a growing relationship with the Father and the Son. These things are being worked together at one and the same time.

I am going to go now to a scripture Richard used this morning. It is John 8:29 and this is important because it is foundational to having a good relationship with God. I will repeat it because I am going to give you a paraphrase of it in more modern language that I think you will be able to relate to.

**John 8:29** And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.



Now here is my paraphrase: "I always do those things that please Him; therefore He is always there for Me."

Do you get it? Who is Jesus saying is empowering Him? It is the Father. In other words, later on Jesus said, "Don't you understand that the Father is the one who does the works in Me?" God was always there for Him. As a human being He had no power to heal anybody, but when He called out to the Father, the Father immediately responded, and boom! The miracle or whatever was needed occurred.

Jesus did not just say to Himself, "I think I'll walk on water here and go across Galilee." You can be very sure He said, "Father, I really need to be on the other side of the lake by tomorrow because I have this and this and this planned. Would you help Me here?" He could walk on water—something no human of and by himself could do, but the Father was always there, and He was responding.

Why was the Father always there? Because the mind and character of Jesus Christ, and His attitude too, was one with the Father, and therefore what He asked for was always within the Father's will. I am certain that none of us will ever reach that in this life, but nonetheless it is a standard we have to shoot for.

What Jesus is doing here is that the very circumstance we all want in our life is created in this manner, and it is consistent, submissive conduct that makes possible the growth of both faith and unity, thus making possible God's positive reaction to those who are working toward becoming one with Him. It is this manner of living, seeking God, which enables one to come to truly know God and to be one with Him in one's thinking. The opposite hand of that is that if we are careless or lazy about carrying out our responsibilities to Him, we are going to see that He does not respond to our prayers. It is like He will not be there.

Please do not get me wrong here. I am not saying that there will be a total emptiness in regard to the relationship with God. Always remember that God is very patient with us. He is kind. He works with us as a Creator who is gently bringing us to the point of oneness with Him. What I am showing you here is a generality that is true. If we want to have unity with the Father, we submit to Him. If we want Him to answer our prayers to Him, we submit to Him, and God responds because He is merciful, and kind, and so forth.

If we are lazy or careless about carrying out our responsibilities to Him, we are going to see, again generally, that He does not respond to our prayers. This fact is gleaned from our personal experiences that God does not always respond to our requests in the time

frame that is comfortable to us. What this has a tendency to do is make us condemn ourselves, feeling that He is not hearing us and that we are displeasing to Him. And then what happens? Just like a chain, we lose our drive, and we waver in our conduct.

How can we be confident that He has heard and will respond? Understand this, too, that it is normal to doubt about our relationship with God; so how do we deal with the doubt? Let us turn to some encouraging instruction that comes from the same man who wrote the book of John.

**I John 3:18-24** My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keeps his commandments dwells in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.

This statement really nails what I am saying regarding this, and I would urge you to try to understand this. It is a little bit convoluted because some of the things within it are difficult to translate from Greek into English. I will do the best I can here.

In verses 18 through 20, John begins by urging us to continue yielding to God *in spite* of the strong possibility that our feelings about our pitiful effort are condemning us because we perceive our efforts as being so weak. In other words, we are being humbled by the fact that we really are weak, and since we are weak [we say] "What does God really think of me?" But actually what John is doing here is saying, "Keep on keeping on." So the first step towards solving this condemning heart is to fully and honestly admit, that even at their best, our works are quite weak. This really is not all that unusual. We are just becoming aware of it.

Compared to Jesus Christ, we just hardly even make a blip on the measuring meter. That much, brethren, is true. However—and this is the good news—our receiving answers does not depend upon perfect obedience that we tend to think is absolutely needed. I am not saying that is not a good goal. It *is* a good goal, but the reality is, if God demanded that of us, nobody would make it.

God is very much like you ladies and gentlemen are in regard to your children. What do you do about your children's behavior? Basically it is this: You take what they do, dividing what they do by their age, by their experience and so forth. You do not expect as much from a six-year old as you would expect from an eight-year old, or a ten-year old, or a twelve-year old. In principle, that is what God is doing too. He takes all those factors together. Though we have room for growth in every occasion, and we could have done better, that does not mean God is not going to respond. He is there for us, and by His grace He makes the judgment and measure, and He will answer us according to our need.

God would truly love to get the kind of obedience from us that He got from Jesus Christ, but what I am saying is that He is also realistic, He is gracious, He is patient, and is immensely kind. Our receiving answers ultimately depends upon God's mercy. John is strongly stating that we must look beyond what is on the surface regarding our feelings, because our feelings are not the standard. In verse 21 he is implying that very thought by speaking strongly of its opposite.

In verse 22 he is essentially saying that we must grab hold of ourselves and trust God and keep obeying Him because God Himself looks beyond our many-times misguided and weak actions to the heart, to the motive, and to the intentions behind the motive; therefore we must continue in faith to submit in obedience to God and get a better handle on our feelings. The result is that our prayers will be answered because we *are* doing things that are pleasing to Him.

Do not give up trying to fulfill John 8:29. That is a tremendously high standard that we have to grow toward, and so do not allow your feelings of self-condemnation stop you from doing what is right and submitting to God even though it is weak and intermittent at times.

Verses 23 and 24 enforce our responsibility to continue trusting God, thus expressing our love for Him and each other, using our faith-based knowledge of Him to fight through what will undoubtedly be a temporary battle with a lack of assurance. In other words, if we are still pushing ahead, the self-condemnation will evaporate.

John's reference in those verses to commandments certainly includes the Ten Commandments, but I think that he is thinking of commandments in broader, more general terms by mentioning loving one another, because loving one another involves many of the finite ramifications that can be gleaned from the Ten. John adds to this by showing in a veiled reference to the subjects that Jesus discoursed on to the disciples in John 14 through John 17 regarding the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Father and Son

dwelling in us, and we in Them.

In summary to I John 3:18, what John is more directly teaching is that keeping God's commands and doing those things that are pleasing to Him, even when battling through occasional doubt, produces two fruits: (1) It makes for more effective prayer. But at the same time the knowledge of our experience teaches us that God answers according to His time-schedule, not ours. In other words, patience will gradually grow because we will learn that God is trustworthy. (2) Battling through this also produces greater internal assurance by means of His Spirit that corroborates and supports the external evidence of the obedience of true faith, of love, and the brethren. It is these that make the producing of unity not merely possible, but highly probable because of the foundation of faith and the relationship with God. God will follow through if we submit.

We are now going to go to a very interesting section in I Corinthians 11.

**I Corinthians 11:17-34** Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one takes before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. [Can you imagine that? This appeared to have happened just before they took Passover.] What? have you not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise you the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are

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judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, tarry one [wait on] for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation.

The exact issues in this chapter dividing them are not my concern at the moment. Rather the principle of unity and personal responsibility toward Christ and Christ's body is. Paul is charging the Corinthians with examining themselves by giving deep respectful consideration, first unto Christ's personal sacrifice for each one of them individually. He warns that if one does not examine oneself and does not repent and change in areas where one finds one has fallen short, then that one may be bringing judgment on one's own head because one is taking the bread and wine in hypocrisy. Now judgment in this case means a sentence handed down as in a case before a judge. In this case the judge is God. I want you to notice this very carefully. I am going to re-read verses 29 through 31.

**I Corinthians 11:29** For he that eats and drinks [the bread and the wine] unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

Do you see what he is saying there? The judgments were already being handed down as evidence by many being sickly and dying. This was happening right in the congregation. God was already actively judging them and handing out the sentences. Paul could have just as easily said, "Hey! Remember Ananias and Sapphira." This is serious business.

Now what is the immediate problem that Paul uses as an illustration in this chapter? It was the attitude and the conduct that the members had toward each other as displayed by their behavior during a mealtime which served as Paul's example. I am sure that there were other things, but that is what came to Paul's mind when he wrote this, and apparently it was something that was right then before he wrote it.

I can assure you that if these people truly had faith in God and were truly aware of Him and of how some of these people were treating others, this would have never happened. It is just like Dathan, Korah, and Abiram. Where was God in their mind? Where was God in the mind of these people in Corinth? It is entirely possible, brethren, that the meal Paul is talking about was nothing more than what we would call a pot-luck.

And what were the brethren doing? They were competing with one another to be the first served and thus getting feisty with one another. I will let you judge.

I will ask a question. Does that seem like too small of an issue to get excited about? It was not too small an issue to God, and to Paul. God was handing out sentences of death, and people were not being healed. People were getting sick because of the manner in which the members were treating one another. Do you understand why, brethren? To treat your brother like that is to treat Jesus Christ like that. To treat your brother like that is to treat the Father like that. He reacted to teach a lesson and to save those who were not guilty yet, but it took the apostle to understand the judgment and deliver to them what was happening. They might have thought the sicknesses and the deaths were just run-of-the-mill things. A "Good old Joe. He was ready to die." kind of thing. Oh no. God is judging His church.

I do not know that these people had lost their salvation. I do not know any of that. I only see what is written there, but we are dealing with something that is serious, because God is one with His body. You see, we have to look beyond the immediate, and those who have faith in God, and those who are aware are going to control themselves. Why? Because they want to submit to God, and when they do, He is going to be there for them. This is something to really think about.

Look again at verse 29. What does Paul pinpoint here was the problem in these people's thinking? They were not discerning the Lord's body. In this case it was not Jesus Christ that they were not discerning. It was the church. Now how do I know that? I said earlier that the subject of unity goes all the way through the book of I Corinthians, and it shows one aspect of it after another.

Sin all by itself creates disunity. Sin done against the brother really creates disunity. I want you to go to chapter 12 again. This is my proof that in verse 29 of chapter 11 Paul meant the church—the Lord's body. Do you know why? Because in the beginning of chapter 12 he goes on to show that everybody in the church—everybody in the body of Jesus Christ—has been given gifts by God. Why? To strengthen the body, the church; to fulfill a position within the church. Then in chapter 12, verse 12, he really zeroes in on it again where he says:

**I Corinthians 12:12** 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.

This mention of the body of Christ goes right back to chapter 11 and verse 29. Paul is

talking there about the church: Christ's body.

**I Corinthians 12:13** For as by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

**I Corinthians 12:15-18** 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.

Everyone! To maltreat a lowly brother is no different in one sense in maltreating an apostle, or maltreating Jesus Christ, because as God sees it, just like he says in verse 12, the body is one. So we have quite a responsibility.

I said that I Corinthians gives the solution. We will not go to it, but I will mention it because Paul just continues right on, and in verse 31 of chapter 12 he said: "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way." And then he launches into I Corinthians 13, and love. This is how unity is created within the body. It is created by love. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, but you see, it has to be yielded to. It has to be submitted to. It has to be used, and when it is, it makes the body one.

I Corinthians 13 goes out into many avenues of the way that love presents itself and the way that it will be used. Ultimately, what Paul is leading to is this: If we do not use the love that is available from God that is shed abroad in our heart, we will not be in His Kingdom. We may be using it imperfectly, but it must be used.

Again, grab onto Richard's sermon and how everybody produces at different rates, and everybody is gifted differently, and that we are all in different areas of growth and so forth, but what is available to us, and what we understand, has got to be used. Unlike sin, love produces unity, and love will produce the other aspects of God's Spirit, so chapter 13 provides the overall solution by showing aspects of Christian love, and we must be using it.

Since we all have the same Spirit, which Paul affirms for us in I Corinthians 12, Paul wipes away any justification we might raise against dealing with one another in the way

that God desires for His family. The enablement to do it is there. Will we submit? This is where we have to deliberately make the choices. Our ignorance must be removed and God does that by educating us to what He is like, and as we begin to see what He is like, we are then enabled to do the same thing to imitate Him in our relationships with one another, and that glorifies God. That really pleases Him because He can see that we are headed in the right direction.

Do you realize that spiritual healing in the Bible is spoken of in the same terminology that physical healing is? The difference between the two is that spiritual salvation is a healing of the heart, the mind, the attitudes, and the conduct; not a piece of our body, but the heart.

I have no idea how much flexibility the Father will give in His judgment of our conduct. I do believe that I, and you too—those of you who have come out of the Worldwide Church of God following Mr. Armstrong's death—have a pretty good idea of the way God has already judged. He blew the church apart, and He blew it apart in mercy because of the weaknesses He perceived within it. His judgment is perfect all the time.

The scattering has actually been produced by Him as a blessing to you and me to get us away from that influence where He could work on us in much smaller groups, in a more "hands on" approach, if I can put it that way, to get rid of the attitudes and the conduct and the perspectives that were quickly enveloping those of us who were members of the Worldwide Church of God. What He has done is part of His healing so that He can put us into positions where we can work in small groups, learning to please Him, and to create unity with one another and with Him as well.

Let us go from here to Ephesians 1. I think all of you know that the central theme of the book of Ephesians is unity. Talking about Jesus Christ:

**Ephesians 1:21-23** 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.

What I want us to see here is a well-known fact, and that is that God Himself is part of the body. In fact He is the most important part of the body because from the Head flows the spiritual strengths empowering the body's other parts, and thus to reject any part of the body is to reject Him too, because it is His body that is being rejected.



Consider this: Suppose that your foot decides that it does not like something the arm does, and it attacks the arm, wounding it badly. Will that not also effect the foot's relationship with the head? Sure it will. It will, because spiritual faith, and spiritual love flow from the Head, and the Head will not appreciate the injury to His body.

Let us go back to I John again, because we are beginning to turn toward the attitude that we need to have should somebody injure us. What should our attitude be when some kind of a dispute arises, or we begin to have hard feelings toward somebody?

**I John 4:9-11** In this was manifested [was given evidence of] the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. [We all understand that.] Herein is love [Here is **real** love. He is going to describe it.], not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation [or the payment] for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

He is saying that if God loved us in this manner, to this extent, He is setting the standard, the bar for us if we are going to be one with Him. Like I said at the very beginning, the standard God sets for us is really significant, so what kind of an attitude should we have toward our brother? What should we be willing to do for our brother? Well, God is saying in these three verses that we should have the same level of love and to extent that He did for us. You talk about setting the standard high!

**I John 4:20** If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

That is a high standard, but that is how far the love of God that is in us can grow to become.

The major, foundational cause of division—broadly stated—is the exaggerated importance of differences. "Greatly exaggerated" because what is the possible loss of being in the Kingdom of God compared to a little difference between brethren? On the other hand, the foundational cause of unity is a kind, loving, active recognition of the importance of commonality. The more we have in common, the greater are the opportunities for unity and peace. That peace part is very important. In James 3:13-18 he essentially says there that "the fruits of righteousness [that is, the fruit of doing the right thing, the fruit of God's Holy Spirit] are produced in an atmosphere of peace.

**James 3:18** And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

This has a logic to it. If there is no peace, but rather there is war between people, what does that war make the people involved do? They become very defensive and they become very self-centered. How much fruit is going to be produced from a self-centered person who is always defending himself? Peace is essential in order to give the opportunity for people to be outgoing and away from themselves, and not defending themselves.

Brethren, what I am pointing out here is why unity is absolutely essential. Where there is unity there is peace, and when there is peace in a congregation, and when there is peace in a family, they can think of each other and serve each other. They will do it because the atmosphere is there for them to do it. But when controversy erupts, it turns people in on themselves, and they have to defend themselves, and not only that, they have to win. Do you understand that? Competition erupts in people who are defending themselves, and they get ready to fight to win. This is why God wants unity. He wants His children to produce much fruit.

Now we have an enemy who is always stirring up antagonism, anger, and bitterness and reasons to get upset. He makes people feel touchy and defensive. You know who I am talking about. When disunity and division occur, you can almost bet the whole estate that this being is involved somewhere in the mix. He is going around accusing. He is telling tales. He is making people choose sides, and on and on it goes, and the first thing you know warfare erupts within a congregation.

Let us go to I Corinthians 6:6-8. This has to be connected in order to be more fully understood with what we just read there in I John 4, about how far God was willing to go. He gave up what He loved the most in order to make peace, and His Son did the same thing. He set that as a standard for us. We should be willing to go that far like the Father and Son did in order to create unity and peace within a congregation.

**I Corinthians 6:1** Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

This is how far down this congregation had sunk. Notice the language. "**Dare.**" "How **dare** you do this!" Boy! That was not Christian at all.

**I Corinthians 6:7-8** Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? why do you not rather suffer [allow] yourselves to be defrauded? No, you do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

The long and the short of this is that people go into lawsuits to defeat the other person. A lawsuit is nothing more than a form of war. Hopefully it is bloodless, but it is the way that has been set up in the world. Paul is saying that we ought to be above that, and he sets a very high standard again, that we should be of the mind, that should something erupt between brethren, the converted among them would be willing to suffer the loss of everything rather than go to war against his brother. Is that not what Christ did? Again, Christ is always the standard.

Human nature drives us to defend ourselves and to uphold our reputation because we want to be perceived as being right. There is pride involved in this as well. Paul is saying that we have to be willing to give up our reputation, our name, our wealth—whatever it takes—to make peace. That is not hard to understand. It is very hard to do. We like to be perceived as being right and good, but if we do something like this, the whole congregation might think, "Boy! That's really one bad person."

Do you know—and I know that you do—that when Christ was put to death, those who put Him to death thought they had won, and that Christ really looked like the bad guy, that He really was guilty. But Christ committed Himself to Him who judges righteously, and He won. Are we willing to do that?

Look to Him who judges righteously, and let Him decide the issue. I am not saying that is easy, but that is one of the standards God lays down. In the meanwhile, even though we may look bad, He tells us in Romans 12: "Take care of that person like you really do love him—that person who did all the harm. Kill him with kindness." Maybe that is a bad choice of words, but that is, in a sense, almost what he says.

Let me give a short summary here.

Number 1: Sin, all by itself, produces division because it cuts us off from the Source of spiritual strength and enablement.

Number 2: A controversy between brothers will inevitably erupt, and thus, if one follows Christ's instruction and example of willingly sacrificing himself and suffering whatever loss occurs and treats the brother with loving prayer, service, and kindness, that one will

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create peace and unity. Why? Because the person is submitting to God to resolve the issue.

That is all for today. I hope you have a very fine remainder of the Days of Unleavened Bread.