

What Is True Christian Unity Worth?

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To speak of true Christian unity implies that a unity may exist that is less than truly Christian. There may indeed be a true unity in religious matters without its being Christian. Those who are members of the Southern Baptist denomination have a true unity, based upon the doctrines they hold in common (many of which are false), but it is not **Christian** unity. True **Christian** unity exists where men all speak the same thing, have no divisions among them and are perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1Cor. 1:10), **with the authority of God's word as the standard**. This unity exists between 2 men or 2,000,000 men, only when (and because) they are all walking in the light of God's truth (1 John 1:7).

Some of our brethren who talk much about unity are seeking it on the basis of doctrinal compromise instead of conformity to Scripture. Surely, Christ did not pray for an impossibility in John 17:21. When he prayed that believers be one, even as he and the Father are one, he included doctrine (as well as purpose, work, attitude, etc.). Likewise, Paul did not intend for the Corinthians and the Ephesians to ignore doctrine when he besought them to speak the same thing, put away divisions and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (1Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3). Since these things are true, we will do well to inquire just how much true Christian unity is worth. Let us pose some questions.

1. Is true unity worth alienating certain brethren?

If a brother persists in an unscriptural doctrine (e.g., that the resurrection has occurred, 2 Tim. 2:17-18), are we to continue to extend fellowship to him, regardless of what he teaches? Are we to have greater loyalty to a brother who is in error than to the Lord and his word and those who are faithful? Are we to have such a concern for "unity" at all costs that we are willing overlook the grievous doctrinal errors of premillennialism, instrumental music in worship, missionary societies, etc., rather than risk alienation from some who want us to embrace them as brethren? If we are determined to maintain fellowship with those who abide not in the doctrine of Christ, we thereby forfeit our fellowship with God (2 John 9:11). When one stands resolutely for the unity prescribed in Scripture, he will find that he has alienated those brethren who seek some kind of unity on broader principles.

2. Is true unity worth the price of alienating family members?

Jesus taught the apostles that because of him family members would become enemies of each other (Mat. 10:34-37). He urged the apostles (and through them, all men) to be united with him (love and obey him, John 14:15), even at the cost of family estrangements. Many of us have family members that oppose the gospel or that have strayed into some false

doctrine or forbidden practice. Unfortunately, some are so emotionally swayed that family loyalty triumphs over loyalty to Christ. The Lord felt a closer relation to those who do the will of God than to his physical family (Mat. 12:48-50). By example, he teaches us to value our relationship to him more than we value peace in our own families (Mat. 19:29).

3. **Is true Christian unity (loyalty to Christ), worth losing a job to attain?**

It is terribly sad to see some of our preachers eagerly accepting invitations from denominational groups to speak on training and lecture programs, with no thought of exposing their errors. Others are willing to tone down their proclamation of truth when pressure from compromising brethren is applied. Let us say with the prophet Micaiah, "As Jehovah liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kin. 22:14), even if we are fired, blacklisted from gospel meetings in many congregations or never invited to speak on certain lectureship programs, "workshops" or "seminars." Blessed are those elders who will not only allow a preacher to so preach, but allow no less, and who will defend such faithfulness when the inevitable attacks come. Although it is disheartening and inconvenient to be driven from a pulpit (or refused entrance to one) because of one's determination to seek true Christian unity, it is most assuredly worth it.

4. **Loyalty to truth must ever be triumphant.**

Had unity been the Lord's ultimate concern, he would have never caused division (Luke 12:51). Neither would the New Testament have ever taught that God's people must separate themselves from evil elements in the world (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 5:11, etc.) and in the church (1 Cor. 5:2ff; 2 The. 3:6,14; Tit. 3:10, etc.).

True Christian unity, based on Biblical authority, the New Testament ever urges at whatever price we must pay. Unity based on anything less is not worthy of the name or worth the price.

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