

August 2004: Standing Together

by Aaron Greenway

The word “unity” sounds like one of those cliché terms that people use to drag you into their cause. In our society, it’s “every man for himself.” As a result of this individualism, we have therefore adopted the same attitude inside the doors of the church. We have then taken the same individualistic ideas into our homes. All of the sudden, a “personal relationship” with Jesus has become a “personal” issue. What do I mean by this?

The Apostle Paul said something specific about sanctification. In Romans 12:1-2, he writes, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Sounds pretty personal, doesn’t it? Well, so it seems. However, if we read the next six verses, we find something very distinct. Read with me. Romans 12:5-6a, “So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.”

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All of the sudden, offering our bodies as a living sacrifice is not just something we do in our prayer closets..., it is also something we do corporately. A living sacrifice, the sanctification of the Church cannot happen without ... the Church. If we chop off an arm, poke out an eye, or punch in some teeth, we think we are solving the problem. Instead, we are wounding ourselves...

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Church. If we chop off an arm, poke out an eye, or punch in some teeth, we think we are solving the problem. Instead, we are wounding ourselves. Unfortunately, there are some who do not understand this concept. This is why it is so easy to throw someone out of the church. It is easy to reject each other if they disagree with you.

Now, to make sure that I am not misunderstood, I do not mean that we should not part fellowship with people who are unrepentant or those who are adopting unorthodox views. But as long as my brother/sister believes in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...as long as he/she believes they are equal, of the same substance, but yet distinct...as long as he/she acknowledges their function...as long as he/she believes Christ was fully human and fully divine...as long as he/she believes Christ died in his/her place and resurrected in full bodily form...as long as he/she believes He sits at the right hand of His Father...as long as he/she believes salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone...as long as he/she believes the Word of God is inerrant and perfect,...and as long as they believe that sin is sin and is punishable by eternal death without Christ, THEN all the other things become “little” things.

Does this mean that we let some issues pass under the bridge without being contested? No, absolutely not. However, we do not let little issues destroy the love that brothers should have for one another. Today, we are too busy splitting churches over the color of the carpet. Today, if a pastor leaves, we leave too, because we don't understand that the Holy Spirit never left. Today, we kick people out over things that have been repented of or things that were done when the person was unsaved. I cannot tell you how many ex-homosexuals or ex-prostitutes have been rejected because of their past, a past renounced and forgiven. The church is where they belong. We are almost sending them back into their lifestyle. What a shame!

And when these fellowships are broken, we think, problem solved! No, not problem solved! We have just wounded the Body of our Lord. Instead of working through problems, praying for one another, sometimes we would much rather take the easy road. It takes more energy to understand a brother than it does to walk with that brother. It takes more sacrifice to give up our own ideas and submit to someone else's. But if we bail out so easily, then the Enemy has won a

huge victory, because now we have resentment, bitterness, and unforgiveness in our heart. A fall out with a brother never produces righteousness. It is only when we are willing to stand with them inspite of our differences will we see the kind of unity that Christ prayed for His church.

Paul wrote later in Romans 12:16, “Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” Where are you today? Is there someone that you need to bury the hatchet with? Are you getting hung up on the “little things” and losing the big picture? Don’t allow the Body of Christ to be wounded. We need each other. What would you do without your hand? Your spiritual walk with God depends not just on you. Without the Church, our relationship with God would never work. We must not be so eager to get rid of the very thing that helps us to grow spiritually...the Body of Christ.