UNITY IN THE BOND OF PEACE

Ephesians 4:3

Thesis: To show the necessity of complete unity for the church to grow.

1. Unity is essential for the church. The church that has unity in the spirit has hope for growth.

2. The church that is bickering and fussing is doomed to decay and division.

3. Jesus commended the peacemakers (Mt 5:9). The Bible is clear on the curse of division and factions:
   A. A work of the flesh (Gal 5:20).
   B. Devilish and hateful (Jas 3:14-16).

4. Unity is a divine necessity for our salvation and the future of the kingdom.

5. Unity is something that is made not naturally inborn. It is something we have to strive for (Phil 1:27; 2:1-3).

6. Brethren if we are not careful we will end up in mere union, several steps below unity. Union will never reach the lost and dying world with the gospel.

So let us notice important facts about unity.

I. Unity begins with the leadership.
   A. If the devil can split the leadership/elders, he can split the church.
      1. A church with divided leadership will be divided the same way.
      2. If elders are divided two or three, there will be the same ratio in the church (Mt 12:25).

      1. They were first to be on guard for themselves vs.28.
      2. They were to watch the flock (church). Note: the price paid for it.
      3. Savage wolves would come in, and men speaking perverse things would arise leading others astray. Vss. 29,30.
      4. How effective could they be if they were divided?

   C. Silent division can occur also.
      1. Members silently leaving to go to other congregations.
      2. We must pray daily for our elders and encourage them often (Heb 13:17, I Thess 5:12,13).
II. Unity is kept when we recognize we are each subject to weaknesses.
   A. The weak and strong are to have good attitudes towards one another.
      1. The strong are to support and help the weak (Rom 15:1,2).
      2. The weak are to refrain from judging the strong (Rom 14:13).
      3. In both cases we are not to be self-absorbed and keep others best interest in mind (Rom 14:19).
      4. Christ example is the one to follow (Rom 15:3).

   B. Only a spirit of compassion and love will work.
      1. The love we have for one another prompts us to help each other get to Heaven (I Pet 4:8).
      2. To build a great church all members must learn to be understanding, courteous and thoughtful of the needs of others.
      3. This includes being respectful and thoughtful of other peoples opinions and differences (Phil 2:3-5; Col 3:12-15).

III. Unity is kept by positive attitudes.
   A. The root of bitterness will destroy unity and trouble our hearts and the church (Heb 12:14-15).
      1. It does not take superior intelligence or talent to criticize or find fault.
      2. Why is it that if we can some how show the preacher, elders or other members are failing in some degree in their following Jesus, it makes us look better (Prov 6:19; Mt 7:12)?

   B. The urgent appeal of scripture is for the to be no divisions among us (I Cor 1:10).
      1. No division/ spilt can be tolerated in the body (I Cor 12:24-25).
      2. There must be the same care for one another (Gen 13:8).
      3. Those who bite and devour one another will be consumed (Gal 5:15).
      4. The only provoking approved by the Lord is to love and good works (Heb 10:24).
      5. If brethren never see encouragement from each other, never feel loved by one another and see criticism and negative attitudes in the place of love and compassion, the church will never grow.

IV. Unity depends upon sweet fellowship and knowledge of each other.
   A. How well do we know each other?
      1. The work and worship of the Lord is the cement that bonds us together.
      2. The unity of the faith is far more than doctrinal agreement.
   Illus: Two men could serve the Lord’s Table with 100% doctrinal agreement, yet they could still be divided through having hard feelings and hate for one another in their hearts.
      3. One of the first steps to unity is and love is and for members to know each other.
B. Building relationships and true fellowship takes time.
   1. The church that spends time together, who eat together and in general,
   have time to cultivate relationships, seldom have any trouble.
   2. Included in withdrawal of fellowship is not eating with that person.
   (I Cor 5:11; II Thess 3:14,15).
   3. Withdrawal of social fellowship is intended to bring one to repentance.
   This will never work if we do not have a meaningful relationship with
   them.

V. Unity is kept by people who are Christ like in their thinking,
   working and dealings with others.
   A. The closer we come to Christ the closer we come to each other.
      1. This is called edifying (Rom 14:19).
      2. This is the desire to build each other up, seek for the best good of
         fellow Christians.
   B. The mind of Christ calls for us to follow Him in this way (Phil 2:3-5).
      1. We are to count others better than ourselves, not look to our own
         things.
      2. We know we have crossed over into maturity when we think of the
         affect our thoughts; actions and words will have on others beforehand.
      3. The mind of Christ will cause us to pray for each other as well as doing
         so before criticizing them.

Conclusion:
1. When harsh judgment ceases among brethren, and the mind of Jesus is practiced, we
   will see a love and harmony among the Lord’s people that will enable us to reach the
   lost.

2. Until there is unity among us the church will never grow.

3. We must remember unity is something we each have to work for.

4. Moses, Aaron and Hur (Exodus 17:8-16).

Note: Most thoughts presented in this outline have been adapted from “how to build a
great church” by Mac Layton.