

UNITY IN FAITH AND DOCTRINE

Workers' Seminar

Oyugis, Kenya

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Apostolic unity

- Acts 2
- 1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, **they were all with one accord in one place.**
- 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
- 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and **it sat upon each of them.**
- 4 And they were **all** filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Apostolic unity

- Acts 2:42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' **doctrine** and **fellowship**, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
- 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.
- 44 And **all** that believed were **together**, and had **all things common**;

Apostolic Unity

- Acts 2:45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to **all men, as every man had need.**
- 46 And they, continuing daily **with one accord** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,
- 47 **Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.**

Unity among pioneers

- My husband, with Elders Joseph Bates, Stephen Pierce, Hiram Edson, and others who were keen, noble, and true, was among those who, after the passing of the time in 1844, **searched for the truth as for hidden treasure.** {TM 24.3}
- We would come together burdened in soul, praying that we might be one in faith and doctrine; for we knew that Christ is not divided. One point at a time was made the subject of investigation. The Scriptures were opened with a sense of awe. {TM 24.4}

Fasting for truth

- **Often we fasted, that we might be better fitted to understand the truth. After earnest prayer, if any point was not understood it was discussed, and each one expressed his opinion freely; then we would again bow in prayer, and earnest supplications went up to heaven that God would help us to see eye to eye, that we might be one as Christ and the Father are one. Many tears were shed. {TM 24.4}**

Faith exemplified

Hebrews 11

- 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
- 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.
- 3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Faith and belief

- But without **faith** it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must **believe** that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Hebrews 11:6.
- Being justified by **faith**. Romans 5:1.
- For we walk by **faith**, and not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7.
- With the heart man **believeth** to righteousness...For the scripture saith, Whosoever **believeth** on him shall not be ashamed. Romans 10:10,11.

Saving faith

- **Faith**
- 4. Evangelical, justifying, or saving faith, is the assent of the mind to the truth of divine revelation, on the authority of God's testimony, accompanied with a cordial assent of the will or approbation of the heart; an entire confidence or trust in God's character and declarations, and in the character and doctrines of Christ, with an unreserved surrender of the will to his guidance, and dependence on his merits for salvation. In other words, that firm belief of God's testimony, and of the truth of the gospel, which influences the will, and leads to an entire reliance on Christ for salvation.
- - (Noah Webster's Dictionary, 1828)

What is doctrine?

- John 7
- 14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and **taught**.
- 15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?
- 16 Jesus answered them, and said, **My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.**
- 17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of **the doctrine**, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. is not mine, but his that sent me.

A call to unity

- Read **the seventeenth chapter of John**, and you will see that God has given us the privilege of being united in Christian love, brethren with brethren, all being bound together by the golden chain of love which has been let down from heaven to unite the believers. God wants you to be like himself. He wants to keep you unspotted from the world, to forgive your sins, and to draw you to himself, that you may step off the ladder into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. – EGW, GCB April 23, 1901, Art. C. par. 5

Christ's prayer fulfilled

- John 17
- 1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:
- 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.
- 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Christ's prayer

John 17

- 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.
- 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.
- 6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.
- 7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

Christ's prayer

John 17

- 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.
- 9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.
- 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.
- 11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

John 17

- 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.
- 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.
- 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17

- 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.
- 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.
- 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.
- 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

John 17

- 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.
- 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;
- 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
- 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

John 17

- 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.
- 24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.
- 25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.
- 26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Truth on every point

- We must present an unbroken front in union and in faith. We must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His grace.... It is through disunion that the enemy comes in and sows his seed. We need the truth on every point. We need less of our own words and more of the Word of God. We are near the close of time, and we cannot afford to make a mistake. Truth will bear away the victory. We must “love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8). We must practice Christian politeness. A soft answer to cruel thrusts turns away wrath.... - {TDG 369.3}

Study and practice

- What can I present before my brethren and sisters more important for their study and practice than the prayer of Christ? The entire seventeenth chapter of John is full of marrow and fatness. Are there not urgent reasons why we should take heed to these words of Christ? Is it not time we sought for the unity for which the Saviour prayed? Shall we open our hearts to the melting love of Jesus? Shall we let that love take the place of the coldness and hardness that have been revealed in our characters? May the Lord have compassion upon us; may He forgive our perversity, and heal our backslidings, and unite the hearts of all that believe the truth in that oneness for which Christ prayed, that which exists between the Father and the Son. - {PrT January 26, 1893, par. 2}

The first work

- Just as soon as you are impressed that there is something standing **between you and God**, or **between you and your brethren**, leave your gift before the altar of prayer, and do that which Christ has said you must do in order for the wrong to be taken out of the way. This is the first work that is to be done in this conference, if we expect the blood of Jesus Christ to be efficacious in our behalf. If we confess and forsake our sins, we shall come into that close relation to Jesus to which reference is made in the seventeenth chapter of John. - {RH May 18, 1905, par. 5}

Christ and His Father

- **Christ is one with the Father, but Christ and God are two distinct personages.** Read the prayer of Christ in the seventeenth chapter of John, and you will find this point clearly brought out. How earnestly **the Saviour prayed that his disciples might be one with him as he is one with the Father.** But the unity that is to exist between Christ and his followers does not destroy the personality of either. They are to be one with him as he is one with the Father. By this unity they are to make it plain to the world that God sent his Son to save sinners. The oneness of Christ's followers with him is to be the great, unmistakable proof that God did indeed send his Son into the world to save sinners. But a loose, lax religion leaves the world bewildered and confused. – RH, June 1, 1905

What is lacking?

- Many among us now know the truth (faith and doctrine) about the Father and the Son, but what has the truth wrought in us?
- So what hinders unity among brethren today?
 - Lack of faith
 - Strange doctrines/lack of truth
 - A lack of practical Christianity (Acts 2)
 - A lack of holy zeal
 - Unwillingness/selfishness

Worldlings watching

- That church whose members feel that they are not responsible for its prosperity will fail to show to the world the **unity**, love, and harmony that exist with the true children of God. Worldlings are constantly watching and criticising with keenness and severity those who profess to love and serve God, yet who show by their lives that they are strangers to the influence of divine grace. **“It is too bad,” says the unbeliever, “to spoil a good worldling to make a bad Christian.** That man is as sharp and eager to advance his own interests as before he professed religion. And what an unchristian spirit he manifests. How he loves to exalt himself. How unkindly he speaks of others. He sees something to find fault with in every man’s character. I tell you, although he belongs to the church, that man will need watching. {RH September 6, 1881, par. 9}

Press together!

- Those who have proclaimed the Seventh-day Adventist Church as Babylon, have made use of the *Testimonies* in giving their position a seeming support; but why is it that they did not present that which for years has been the burden of my message-the **unity** of the church? Why did they not quote the words of the angel, “**Press together, press together, press together**”? Why did they not repeat the admonition and state the principle, that “**in union there is strength, in division there is weakness**”? {GRC 38.3}

Sparks of division

- It is such messages as these men have borne that divide the church, and put us to shame before the enemies of truth, and in such messages is plainly revealed the specious working of the great deceiver, who would **hinder** the church from attaining unto perfection in **unity**. These teachers follow the sparks of their own kindling, move according to their own independent judgment, and cumber the truth with false notions and theories. They refuse the counsel of their brethren, and press on in their own way until they become just what Satan would desire to have them—unbalanced in mind. {GRC 38.3}

Bearing fruit

- The only safety for the Christian is to be unwearied in his efforts to live on **the plan of addition**. The apostle shows the advantages to be gained in thus doing. **For those who add grace to grace**, God will work on **the plan of multiplication**, so that the graces will be in and abound in the religious life, and he will not “be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Those abounding in the Christian graces will be zealous, lively, vigorous in all **practical Christianity**, and will practice righteousness—just as the branch abiding in the vine will produce the same fruit that the vine bears and will bring forth much fruit. {19MR 350.2}

The yoke of Christ

- **Practical Christianity we must have**, or we cannot enter heaven. Hearing and preaching the gospel is not enough. We must wear the yoke of Christ; we must learn of Him to be meek and lowly. We must be doers of the Word. “If ye know these things,” Christ declares, “happy are ye if ye do them.” “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” [John 13:17; James 1:22.] {Lt169-1904.14}

Practical Christianity

- Practical Christianity means **laboring together with God every day; working for Christ, not now and then, but continuously.** A neglect to reveal practical righteousness in our lives is a denial of our faith and of the power of God. God is seeking for a sanctified people, a people set apart for His service, a people who will heed and accept the invitation **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.”** {BLJ 342.2}

Loving the brethren

- We are to love our brethren as Christ has loved us. We are to be patient and kind, and yet there is something lacking—we must love. **Christ tells us that we must forgive the erring even seventy times seven, and how infinitely greater is the love of God than is our love.** It is not the greatness of our sin but the depth of our repentance that brings the pardoning love of God to our hearts. When there is much forgiven, the heart loves much. Love is a tender plant. It needs to be constantly cultured or it will wither and die. {19MR 349.5}

One with Christ

- My brethren and sisters, take your stand on an elevated platform, and work to the point to be one with Christ. The heart of the Saviour is set upon his followers' fulfilling God's purpose in all its height and depth. **They are to be one with him, even though they are scattered the world over.** But God can not make them one in Christ unless they are willing to give up their own way for his way. – RH, June 1, 1905

A true picture?

- There is another who is harsh and severe with those whom he employs. He is impatient even to the animals under his control, and abuses them as if they had no feeling. Such men have made no change for the better.” **In too many cases this is a true picture.** What a barrier have such professed Christians erected to **hinder** sinners from coming to Christ! They are a curse to their families, and a curse to the church. Christ’s true disciples will manifest his meekness and gentleness in strong contrast to the storm and bluster and bravado of the great adversary and his followers. {RH September 6, 1881, par. 9}

What the church needs

- What the church needs in these days of peril is **an army of workers** who, like Paul, **have educated themselves for usefulness**, who have a **deep experience in the things of God**, and who are **filled with earnestness and zeal**.
- **Sanctified, self-sacrificing** men are needed; men who will not shun trial and responsibility; **men who are brave and true; men in whose hearts Christ is formed** “the hope of glory,” and who with lips touched with **holy** fire will “preach the word.” For want of such workers the cause of God languishes, and fatal errors, like a deadly poison, taint the morals and blight the hopes of a large part of the human race. {AA 507.2}

Lifting the standard

- We are nearing the end of the earth's history, and God calls upon all to lift the standard bearing the inscription, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." He calls upon His people to work in perfect harmony. He calls upon those engaged in our medical work to unite with the ministry; He calls upon the ministry to cooperate with the medical missionary workers; and He calls upon the church to take up their appointed duty, holding up the standard of true reform in their own territory, leaving the trained and experienced workers to **press** on into new fields. {CH 517.3}

A divine instruction

- No word is to be spoken to discourage any, for this grieves the heart of Christ and greatly pleases the adversary. All need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit; all should refrain from censuring and disparaging remarks and draw near to Christ, that they may appreciate the heavy responsibilities which the co-workers with Him are carrying. **“Press together; press together,”** are the words of our divine Instructor. Unity is strength; disunion is weakness and defeat. {CH 517.3}

Way forward

- Discuss with your elder or fellow church worker three things that may hinder unity in your local church.
- Suggest biblical ways of overcoming them.
- Consider what YOU can do to make unity a reality.
- Pray that God may help you to fulfill your responsibility.
- Pray for unity in “the scattered church” in the whole world.