

Moving into Unity

As we continue with the Lord, we are faced with the issue of **unity**. In our early walk with the Lord, we concentrate on our relationship with Jesus. Our focus is on what the Lord has done for us. However, that is not the end of the matter. It is not even the most important thing. We need to remember that the Lord does something *for* us, that He might do something *in* us so that He can do something *through* us. This relates to the section in the previous lesson that deals with “ask—seek—knock”. As we live in the “ask” level of maturity, we are appropriating all that God has done *for* us. As we move into the “seek” level, the Lord begins doing a deep work *in* us. As we move into the “knock” level, the Lord begins to open doors of ministry so that He can work *through* us.

It is easy being spiritual by ourselves, but when others are brought into relationship with us it becomes much more difficult. After all, the scriptures say that we are a "peculiar people" (Titus 2:14)! I think that I have met my fair share of them, too. We each are convinced that we are the only normal person around.

However, we are not members alone, but "members one of another" (Romans 12:5). God has so structured His body that no one member can do everything by himself but requires others in order to accomplish the work that God has called him to do. We need each other.

Psalms 133:1-3 NASB

- (1) **A Song of Ascents, of David.** Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!
- (2) It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, *Even* Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes.
- (3) It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing--life forever.

The emphasis should be on "dwell together". We have lost the sense of community that is the Church. Not communal, not necessarily under one roof, but the community of brethren dwelling together.

It used to be that we grew up in a town, lived there, raised our family there, and eventually died there. It was our community. Everyone knew us; knew who our parents were; knew our reputation; and accepted us as citizens of the community. Now, with our mobile society and broken homes, this is not the case. We are wanderers without roots; aliens; outcasts; never feeling that we fit in. There has been something lost from our society and our relationships.

That which is lost in the world should be found in the Church--love, acceptance, forgiveness, and unity. Ephesians 4:3 says that we should endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit". We don't need to **create** unity. That is not our job. We only need to **recognize** that which already exists through the Holy Spirit.

Unity is a spiritual experience. Uniformity is its carnal counterfeit. Unity comes by the Spirit. To dwell together in unity requires that we walk in the Spirit. Unity is something that our hearts cry out for even when we don't realize what it is that we need. The psalmist said that it is "good and pleasant". It is there that God **commands** the blessing.

Notice too that unity begins at the top and flows downward. That's one thing about the oil in the Psalm, it always flows down, never up. Unity must begin in the leadership. As the leaders come together in unity, then the followers will naturally come together also.

John 17:22-23 NASB

(22) "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

(23) I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

We are perfected in unity. We can't be complete without it. This is by the intention of God as a testimony so that the world may know that Jesus was sent of the Father. This is evangelism by community witness! Is this where the Church is failing? Where is our testimony? Where is our witness?

We think of unity as something mystical or reserved for Heaven. Is that right? What type of unity is in the Godhead? Its not mystical, but real, authentic, genuine, and powerful. It is a unity based on **light, life, and love**. It is a unity that Jesus prayed that we would have with each other.

THE BRICK WALL

In a previous lesson we discussed the laying aside of our wills for the will of the Lord and said that there were three hindrances to doing so: rebellion, resentment, and independence. These three areas are roadblocks to true leadership. Now, we find that there is one great barrier between us and unity: **lawlessness**.

Lawlessness means "without law". In society, one who breaks or disdains the law of the land is called an outlaw. Well, the Church is filled with "**spiritual outlaws**", those who have become a law unto themselves and have set aside the requirements of God. One of the pollsters did a survey several years ago of those who professed to be Christians. Most of them attended Church on a fairly regular basis, yet better than 75% said that their religion did not effect their daily decisions!

Lawlessness is a spirit. Rebellion is an attitude. Rebellion arises in a person under two conditions:

- the circumstances of life
- the dealings of God.

In our previous lessons, we have seen how rebellion is exposed by these conditions. However, lawlessness can be much more subtle. It can be hidden under layers of religious words or pious

actions.

A thief can still be a thief even though he is not stealing at the moment. We can be an outlaw even though our actions are acceptable at the moment. Lawlessness is a matter of the heart. Lawlessness is only exposed when law is placed on us.

"Oh, but we are not under law but grace," you say. That's not entirely correct. We no longer keep the law for salvation, but receive grace through Jesus Christ. But Jesus said that He did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. Paul said that the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24). Jeremiah said that in the New Covenant God would write His law on our hearts. From this do you get the impression that law still has a place and purpose in God's business?

Commandments are the specific *instructions* of the law. God has always intended that we keep His commandments. It's not whether we should or shouldn't but *how* we keep them that is important.

Commandment as a word is used 71 times in the New Testament (69 as "commandment", 2 as "precept"). Someone has estimated that there are over 1000 commandments from Matthew through Revelation.

When a commandment comes, we have two choices:

- submit, or
- resist.

This is an individual **choice**. Obedience is not automatic but is a learned accomplishment (Hebrews 5:8). The desire to obey is not obedience. Obedience requires action.

Romans 13:1-5 NASB

- (1) Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.
- (2) Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.
- (3) For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;
- (4) for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.
- (5) Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

Literal translation of "*subjection*" is two words and means "**to stand under**". The same Greek structure is used for "*resist*" and means "**to stand against**". These are our response choices. We either stand under or we stand against. There is no middle ground.

Lawlessness and obedience are dealt with in two arenas of our lives. The arena of the *visible and*

enforceable and the arena of the *invisible and unenforceable*. There are many areas where our obedience is obvious and external. These are enforceable from the outside. They deal with rules and regulations.

However, lawlessness hides in the unenforceable areas. These are many times subjective and internal. An example is "love". Jesus commanded us to love one another, but He doesn't make us do it. It is unenforceable.

We can replace our spirit of lawlessness with a spirit of obedience when we can obey in the realms that are unenforceable.

To tear down the wall of lawlessness that keeps us from unity requires us coming to grips with three areas of the unenforceable:

- **murmuring**--typically, this is done against people, especially those that God has placed in authority.
- **criticizing**--typically, this is against the character and actions of people, especially those that God has placed in authority.
- **complaining**--typically, this is against the requirements or conditions that have been placed on us by people, especially those that God has placed in authority.

You see, a rebel seeks to find fault with the authority over him so that he will not have to submit. The lawless one then justifies his rebellion by doing his own thing without regard to the Lord's requirements.

LEARNING TO SERVE

Lawlessness always wants to do its own thing. God's remedy is to teach us to serve. Being a servant is, like obedience, learned behavior. Learning to serve will break many things in us that are contrary to the way of God.

Jesus presents us with the greatest example of the heart of a servant.

John 13:1-7 NASB

- (1) Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.
- (2) During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, *the son of Simon*, to betray Him,
- (3) *Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,
- (4) *got up from supper, and *laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.
- (5) Then He *poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

- (6) So He *came to Simon Peter. He *said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"
- (7) Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter."

For Jesus to do this required that He be *secure* in Who He was. **Security** is an inherent principle in the art of serving. The spirit of serving as presented by Jesus is the greater serving the lesser without personal gain. Serving flows out of security and love.

Our society is filled with selfishness and insecurity. This has created a generation that wants to be served rather than serve. We cannot serve successfully until we have overcome our position seeking and our absence of personal security. (According to Luke 22:24, just prior to the foot washing, the disciples were discussing who would be greatest in the Kingdom and who would be closest to the Master.)

The scriptures tell us how to serve.

Ephesians 6:5-7 NASB

- (5) Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;
- (6) not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.
- (7) With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

Colossians 3:22-24 NASB

- (22) Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.
- (23) Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,
- (24) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

Definition of the Greek word, *doulos* (slave), according to the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament:

- 1) a slave, bondman, man of servile condition
 - 1a) a slave
 - 1b) metaphorically, one who gives himself up to another's will; those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing His cause among men; devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests
- 2) a servant, attendant

Serving involves laying down our life for another. Jesus said that there is no greater love than that. Since we are bought with a price, it also means losing our life.

Matthew 16:24-25 NASB

- (24) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

(25) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Luke 17:7-10 NASB

(7) "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'?"

(8) "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and *properly* clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'?"

(9) "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?"

(10) "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done *only* that which we ought to have done.'"

A SERVANT BECOMES A STEWARD

As we learn to serve another, it naturally leads into taking care of the things of another. This is stewardship. Stewardship requires faithfulness.

Luke 16:10-12 NASB

(10) "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

(11) "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you?"

(12) "And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"