



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21). So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading (Nehemiah 8:8). Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend (Proverbs 27:17).

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Unity of the Spirit in the Bonds of Peace

I hesitate to say too much in fear that we might have ones here that have been (we would say) hurt in the last week, month, or two or three, lest I might say anything that might discourage them more and they might wander out into the world. God forbid. Nevertheless, we see in the Scriptures especially as Paul writes to the Ephesian church in Ephesians 4.

Notice that Paul makes it

very clear, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:13). Dear ones, this is what I trust that every one of us should do from the back bench of the congregation to the front bench. Every one of us has a part in this because the unity of the Spirit dwells among the believers. The unity of the Spirit, no doubt if this is in a congregation, God will look down from on high and

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His blessing will be upon it. He will give His smile of approval upon a congregation where there is the unity of the Spirit.

Today, we have people who believe that as long as there is unity that is a sign that the Spirit of God is there. I would like to share this too that there is a difference between the unity of the Spirit or the spirit of unity. We could have the spirit of unity and not have God's blessing upon a group of people or upon us.

However, we also can have the unity of the Spirit and we know God's blessing is upon it. Therefore, we have the two which we would like to point out to you because there is a great danger, dear ones, each one of us, in the day and age in which we live, to get in mind that when we have the spirit of unity not all is well.

We see in different portions of Scripture the unity of the Spirit which Paul reminds us of,

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in many different ways. Especially, he reminds us in the New Testament, Paul reminds us in the book of Romans, the book of 2 Corinthians, and also different portions of Scripture that we should be of “one mind” (Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 1:27; 2:2). We should “all speak the same thing” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Therefore, we notice the unity as a group of believers, as father and mother in the home, and as they bring up their children. We expect unity. Then, as we gather together in a congregation this size we know that we have many families and they are gathered together and then God expects us to be in the unity of the Spirit.

I would like to remind us that we might speak all the same things but there are some different upbringings. Therefore, it is very needful to seem to fit in some place in the congregation that we can have a part in serving the brotherhood together as a unit, as a body. We notice the apostle Paul reminds us very clearly in 1 Corinthians 12. He refers to us as a body, just as our literal body. That is, we have eyes and we have literal parts of the body. Each member of the body takes its rightful place. I am so glad it does. I am so glad that if my left hand is hurt that

my right hand is more willing to take that load, and the same with the feet.

Whatever the case might be, Paul illustrates this as a body. To me, it seems that he is pointing out this: the Church, the body of Christ, the body of believers, should work on the same basis as our body does. If one of our members lacks, there is someone else there to take that load. If one member suffers, we all suffer. Notice the close connection we have as a body of believers gathered together. Especially, we are referring now to one congregation whether it is your congregation, whether it is our congregation that the Lord has placed us in. That does not matter so much. We need a unity of the Spirit, dear ones to have the approval of God upon us. Therefore, it is everyone’s duty and privilege. Everyone has a part in this to do it.

We have an “adversary” (1 Peter 5:8) Satan the devil, and this is what he would like to see. He would like to see that unity of the Spirit destroyed. This is his aim. As long as the peace of God is upon the congregation and the people go forth in peace there Satan has not the grip upon the people as when the unity is separated. When love has gone out, when hatred has come in then at

once the Holy Spirit cannot convey that message from the pulpit from the ones who break the bread of life to you. There is something missing. Did you ever feel that?

When there is something like this the Holy Spirit cannot move among the congregation. He reminds very clearly in the book of 1 Peter 3 of the relation between husband and wife. If they do not get along with each other it says the prayers are hindered [see 1 Peter 3:7]. Therefore, if the prayers are hindered in the home because of father and mother not in one unit, how much more would it be in the congregation? *When there is not unity in the congregation the way it should be we notice that the Spirit of God cannot move.* I trust in our day He can move. I have this confidence and I have no other doubting in my mind that the Holy Spirit can move tonight through our brother as he breaks to us the Bread of Life.

It is very important, dear ones, to be in the right spirit and be led by the right spirit. Therefore, when we have the unity of the Spirit, we are guided by the Holy Spirit and we take orders from the Word of God. This is where we gauge ourselves by it. No doubt, there are many things that might happen in the

congregation that maybe are not so pleasant. The question then could be asked, "Who is right and what is right?" Many times. This is why I said in the beginning I want to be very careful how I present this to you because I do not want to hurt anyone.

I like to remind you of this. When there is some friction in the congregation or when there is some discussion among the brotherhood (I am sure everyone means it well) and everyone tries his best, no doubt, because we notice in Matthew 5:9 that it says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Therefore, each one of us should have this in mind as we think of the congregation that we want to continue to work in love and to make peace. This, is something that each of us can do.

We notice in Proverbs too that it says there are seven things that the Lord hates. One is "he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:19). This is something that disturbs the people. *When there is a brother or sister in the congregation who goes through this congregation and sows discord, this is opposite of unity.* This disturbs the congregation in such a way that the unity is split in a hurry. There is division. Therefore, in the congregation where this is happening (and I would like to say this

very kindly, and very carefully) dear ones, then already Satan has something to work with.

Dear ones we would like to remind you of a few things. The apostle Paul makes it so clear in the New Testament. We notice in the book of Romans and also in 1 Corinthians 1. Let us turn to this to remind us of some of the things the apostle Paul reminds the Christian church. I would like to remind you of this, that the apostle Paul addresses this congregation which is a wonderful wording. If this wording would not start in the first chapter in the second verse, I would question somewhat the Corinthian church because they had a lot of trouble in this church. They had divisions. They were confused with speaking in tongues.

Paul relates this very clearly in chapter 11 about the Christian woman's veiling and the place of a woman in the church in this book. We notice, and we would question if this would not be written in the first few verses, we would believe this church would not have been in right relationship with the Lord. Notice how the apostle Paul addresses this church. He says, "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, (2) Unto

the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:1, 2). Notice what he says, "to them that are sanctified . . ." and also "called to be saints."

Here is a group of people whom the apostle Paul felt they had started in the right direction. They were a group of people that Paul had much confidence in. However, he did not go very far and he was reminding them of some differences they had among themselves. Is this true among us? Do we so easily get our minds centred upon someone? I am so glad that I know of nothing here and therefore it is much easier to preach when we know nothing. As far as how your standing is in the church, I know nothing, except as far as I know it is good. Praise the Lord. Therefore, as I am here, if I say anything that you might feel I am speaking or reminding someone of what I am saying, he might know of something, I do not know. If the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart praise Him for it.

Paul reminded us very clearly here. He wrote here in 1 Corinthians 1:8-12, "Who shall

also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. (10) Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (11) For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. (12) Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”

We notice that there was somewhat a difference between the ministry. I am saying in the ministry, but there were people who when one got up and he preached they could take the message, or they accepted the message better from one than from the other. This sounds familiar, does it not, in our own minds that we have people (and I do not know but I think I can say that some of us, if not most of us) who have some liking to some people more to listen for their preaching than others. I think we can say this. Nevertheless, we

need to be careful that we do not put our trust in man. There are some people who can bring the same message as others, but it simply seems to mean more to me and no doubt to you.

This is a case here, and Paul states this very clearly. “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. (13) Is Christ divided?” Well, no. “was Paul crucified for you?” No. “Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul” (verse 13)? Well, I hope not. Paul reminded them there that they were standing or coming to a place where they were depending more on man than they were depending on Christ. In others words, he reminds us that “You are taking man as your guide.” We need to be very careful, each one of us, as I mentioned, that there are some brethren that we have a liking more to and therefore we take them more as our guide.

If we do this, I would like to warn about it. That is a very dangerous thing because man is not perfect. Therefore, I would like to say that if we follow man and that man makes a mistake of whom we had all the confidence in, it will do one of two things: we will lose confidence — we will weaken our faith, or we will

fall with him. It is very hard to get away from one of these two things. I am not saying we will, but we are apt to do one of the two. If one man is doing this, "I will do the same thing. He did it and I have so much confidence in him, he must be right. What he did, he must be right," and we will take no counsel." Therefore, it is a very dangerous thing.

We notice in 1 Corinthians 3 that Paul changes ideas somewhat because of the different ideas or the different people they had in mind. He gave them a little different picture of what they have been and what they are now. I trust that as we think of ourselves that we might look back and see what we were. However, if we have not grown from where we were a year or two ago, God forbid. Let us take close notice that we are in better standing today than what we were three years ago, or two, or one, whatever the case may be.

We notice again what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:2. He called them "saints" and he called them "sanctified," or cleansed. Now, in 1 Corinthians 3:1-5 he says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. (2) I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were

not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. (3) For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (4) For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? (5) Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"

Notice that he says that they were carnal. I would like to be very careful that I would not want to call anyone who does not think exactly the way some of the other members do that I would say right away they are carnal. Rather, I would like to remind you to be very careful and take notice that we have the Word of God to go by. There might be some differences in opinions in the congregation, on little things.

I when it comes to the teaching which the apostle Paul and others in the New Testament have taught, where we want to allow this in the congregation, or that in the congregation (I might mention a few things to remind you what I am referring to). When we are coming to the place as a congregation where we would take a vote on whether we would want TV or whether we would want the radio, or whether we

would want a piano, or whether we would want a few other things like this, or whether we want to open our doors for more worldliness in our homes, whatever the case might be, then we do not look upon the majority of the congregation dear ones. We still must go by the Word of God and we take the unity of the Spirit, not the spirit of unity.

Therefore, I would like to remind you that we need to be very careful that we handle a situation like this very carefully, because we always have people that are hurt. When someone is hurt, when my little finger is hurt (I just bumped my finger the other day and it is a little tender, or I cut my thumb and it is a little tender) it would hurt really badly if someone would come and take a look at it and would purposely give it a bump. That would really hurt, would it not? It would really hurt. Dear ones, we need to be really careful in the congregation that when we know of a brother or a sister who is offended, or has become weak, or is somewhat or in some way was misunderstood and are not feeling the way they should, we might say, "Well, they might be carnal."

They might be discouraged dear ones. Be very careful that you do not go and bump that per-

son purposely because it really will hurt. Here is where we need to show our love one to another that we have a Christian love and a desire that not one soul might go astray, until we get this thing settled, whatever the case might be.

In 2 Corinthians 12:18 Paul again reminds us almost of the same thing. "I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?" The apostle Paul makes it very clear. He urged Titus to go to the Corinthian church here, as I understand this, and asked them, "Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit?" "Did it help any when Titus came?" It seems to me they did not change their mind a bit. Or, "walked we not in the same spirit?" In other words, did Titus bring anything different than what we have brought?

Certainly Paul and Titus' walk and their thinking was alike. Paul wrote, "Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. (20) For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not"

(verses 19, 20a). Paul was saying here, in other words, “I fear that when I come I will be saddened. I will be saddened because you have not changed.” Therefore, he says, “lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: (21) And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed” (verses 20b, 21). Here he reminded them that they had backbiting, envying, debate, strife, whisperings, swellings, and tumults. All this had come about and this is not what we call the unity of the Spirit.

There are some Old Testament examples of people who had the spirit of unity. I mentioned that we should have unity of the Spirit. However, the Old Testament reminds us very clearly that there was a group of people who had the spirit of unity. I like to have this clear in my mind. Sometimes I get it changed around, but if I do I want you still to try to get it in the right order. When we have the spirit of unity it is not a sure guide. Rather, we need the unity of the Spirit, the unity of the

Holy Spirit to guide us and to keep us and to strengthen us along the way.

In the Old Testament in Numbers 15, we notice that Moses at this time was the leader of Israel. This great work had begun. He led these children of Israel through the wilderness. I notice here a very humble man. When something arose there is one place he went, and that is he came before the Lord and asked for direction. That is a very good place to go — the best that he knew, and the best there was. He did nothing on his own unless he came to God. If there was something that came to him before it was revealed, before what was written beforehand, he came to God and asked God what he must do.

Here, a man was found who was working on the Sabbath, or gathering a few sticks on the sabbath day in Numbers 15:32. We would say he was caught. He was taken. They took him “And they put him in ward” (verse 34). Moses did not know what to do. Therefore, he called upon God and the Lord told him that he was supposed to be stoned to death, the Bible says, and all the congregation stoned him to death.

We know what happened. In the next chapter we notice that there were three men who came

up Moses and against Aaron the next day. They said, “Ye take too much upon you” (Numbers 14:3). “You take too much upon you. . . all the congregation are holy.” Here they had three men. I am talking about the spirit of unity. These three men had the spirit of unity. Besides this they had taken two hundred and fifty men out of the congregation which it says were renowned men. We would say they were looked up to. Maybe it could have been close to the leaders — two hundred and fifty of them, and they too were with the three that came to Moses.

The next day what happened? Moses fell before God and Moses plead with God. Moses said, “Tomorrow we will see who is right.” Here was a group of people who had the spirit of unity but they were wrong. This is very sad. Here was a group of people who had a spirit of unity. This group of people thought alike but the blessing of God was not upon it because they were running ahead. They were getting out of place. They had told Moses and Aaron, “You are taking too much upon you.”

We have people today who get out of place in the congregation. “You are taking too much upon you. “Brother you are tak-

ing too much upon you. You are out of place. All the congregation is holy. You cannot deal this way.” Moses did what God had told him. Today, we have the New Testament. We have the Bible to guide us. The Bible tells us that to deal with such a person this is what we must do. There is a group that has a spirit of unity. We cannot accept that because we need the unity of the Spirit. Praise God for the unity of the Spirit that a congregation might be in oneness when they see sin in the congregation, and all the congregation feels that sin must be dealt with, and that we have the unity of the Spirit. God’s blessing can rest upon it. If that person, or that soul, sees that there is a unity of the Spirit they know that when they leave the church or when there is excommunication upon it they know that the whole church has approved it because of my life. Also, or that they might know that the church is praying for them and that everyone wants me back.

Here is where we need the unity of the Spirit — when there is a wayward son, when there is a wayward daughter, whatever the case might be, or a member of the congregation. When there is unity of the Spirit among the brotherhood, they will sense that.

However, when they see before they go that there is some there that would rather see us go anyway what do I want to come back for? Here is where we need to be very careful.

We could go into the New Testament. We can see in Acts 5 the example of Ananias and Sapphira. They both agreed together to come in and they lied before God, before the Holy Spirit. The husband came before Peter and said, "We have sold our property for so much, and here it is." It was not true, and it cost his life. A few verses down further his wife came in about three hours later and said the same thing. Then, Peter said "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord" (Acts 5:8)? See, they had the spirit of unity but they never had the unity of the Spirit.

Therefore, we need to be very careful when we think of the spirit of unity and the unity of the Spirit. Further, in Acts 23:15, 21 we notice there a group of men (more than forty men) who agreed together. They had the spirit of unity to kill Paul. They would not eat anymore before they would kill Paul. Well, that must have fallen in the dirt. Paul escaped and we do not hear anything that they buried forty. Therefore, they must have

changed their mind. Nevertheless listen, they had the spirit of unity.

We notice again yet, dear ones, that when we have the unity of the Spirit among the believers in the congregation, it is every one of us. Ephesians 4 reminds us of this. It is everyone's duty. It is very easily said and done. It is very easy to apply it to someone else. However, to do it when it comes to us — to forget the past — someone has offended us — it has not gone the way I thought it should.

I suppose that if I asked any brother in a given congregation if every time a decision is made in the congregation that every time it went the way that he thought it should have. I will not put on a test. I can say with fair certainty that we could say that not every time did it go the way we thought. I think we can say sometimes that it was good that it did not always go the way I thought it should, because we found out after that the other way was all right too.

I feel the same way. There are times when it did not go my way and found out after it was better it did not. However, there are times when it went my way and I was glad it did. There were times when it did not go my way and I still feel today that it might

have been better if it would have. However, here is where we need to work side by side with each other and respect each other.

I am not talking about sin in the church. There is no question about this. We need to deal with sin. I hope this is understood. In Ephesians 4:1 we notice “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” This is the key answer to most of the problems. Everyone needs to stay in their rightful place.

God has blessed the congregations with different gifts — of the ministry, by preaching the Word, by song leaders, by teachers, by helpers, financially and spiritually. Every born again soul has a gift from God, at least one. Some might have more, but at least one. God expects you to use that gift. Nevertheless, at the same time, God expects you to use it in the place where He has called you to use it.

Sometimes, here is where we get out of place. It is when we do not think the other one can quite do it the way he should so I want to do it for him, and we run ahead of God. I would like to leave this you. We, as a congregation should have so much confidence in the ministry by which you work with and with the bishops

you work with that you are satisfied with the decision they are making. If you do not have the confidence in that group of people, I fear you are not in the right group.

Whether the whole group is off or whether you are, I would say be careful before you move. When this happens, dear ones, and you feel that the others are all bypassing you, take another good look and see if you have done all you can to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2), “Endeavouring,” or do all we can “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (7) But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Ephesians 4:4–7). Everyone is gifted. Everyone is blessed, and everyone God has gifted.

Let us go down to verses 11–13, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some,

pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Notice again, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith.”

In closing, I would like to remind you that the apostle Paul

reminds the Corinthian church in 2 Corinthians 13:11–14, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. (12) Greet one another with an holy kiss. (13) All the saints salute you. (14) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” May the Lord bless.

The Doctrine of Uniformity

I want to consider what I have entitled *The Doctrine of Uniformity*. I know the word *uniformity* is not found in the Bible but we certainly find the principles are very much in the Bible. Defining uniformity, it comes from the word “uniform.” Uniform means “to be always the same, not varying or changing in form.” This second definition is basically what I have in mind as we look at the doctrine of uniformity, “having the same form, appearance, manners as others in the same class.” Those are dictionary definitions but they certainly apply to the Scriptural doctrine of uniformity.

Uniformity is very closely related to unity. It brushes quite close to the doctrine of harmony. It also is very closely related to

the doctrine of nonconformity. I want to look at it in three areas. I want to considering I) Uniformity in doctrine. II) Uniformity in spirit. Then, III) the uniformity in practice.

We will be paging to a number of Scriptures and I invite you to do the same. I) As we consider uniformity in doctrine let us turn to Galatians 1:6–9 for the first Scripture. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: (7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (9) As

we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

As we think of uniformity in doctrine 1) *We know our doctrine must be based on the foundation of the Scriptures.* That is a fixed truth. I believe we have all embraced the doctrine of Christ, the Gospel of Christ with its various elements. We will not get into those various elements. The apostle Paul addressed the Galatian believers as they were struggling between the Gospel of grace through Christ and the Old Testament Law. He warned them how serious it is to go back on Christ and the Gospel of Christ. It is very serious to imbibe false doctrine. Therefore, we want uniformity in doctrine.

In 1 Timothy 1:3, 4 the apostle Paul addressed Timothy “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, (4) Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.” Here is the call to shun all false doctrine. He charged Timothy that they would teach no other doctrine and that they would

embrace and receive no other doctrine but the doctrine of the truth. They were not to give heed to fables and so forth which only bring confusion and misunderstandings. It was a warning against false doctrine.

2) *There is the call to uniformity in doctrine by embracing the doctrine of Christ.* 2 John 9–11 says, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. (10) If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: (11) For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” Verse 9 suggests that if we abide not in that doctrine we do not have God. We cannot say that we love and are serving God and we do not believe the doctrine of Christ.

When we think, rethink, and focus on the doctrine of Christ we are thinking of this doctrine as believed, embraced, and taught by the Church — the doctrine of Christ. There are many so-called Christians who believe in Calvinism. They believe in baptismal regeneration. They believe in the second work of grace or the need to speak in tongues and the list could go on.

Many of them do not believe the doctrine of nonresistance or separation of the world and nonconformity. Therefore, we embrace the doctrine of Christ as it is believed, embraced, and taught by the Church so that we have uniformity in doctrine.

3) *Uniformity gives the call to be of the same mind.* First Corinthians 1:10, 11 says, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (11) For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.” Then Paul continues and describes the contentions that were present there. I will not get into that. This means, “the same in thought, feeling, and understanding.” Then, he also goes on to say “in the same judgment.” That carries the idea of being of the same opinion, the same resolve, consent, the same purpose, and agreement.

This uniformity as it is outlined in verse 10 is tested when the Bible principles and teachings are made practical. Then, this uniformity is put to test. One example is the principle of mod-

est attire. We look across the professed church and there is not a lot of uniformity in that area. We also realize that there is more than one application of the doctrine of modesty. Nevertheless, as a church we come to a common understanding of what we believe is a practical application of modesty, and then we want to have uniformity in that. However, we are put to test in these areas when there can be varied applications to Bible principle.

The call here is that we are of the same mind and the same judgment that we judge issues alike, and have this uniformity in doctrine.

4) 2 Corinthians 13:11 says, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” Is it correct to say that uniformity in doctrine is absolute? Maybe I should make this one exception. We know there are varied opinions on eschatology so we might say in that sense we relate to each other. We do get along with each other when there is not total uniformity in that area. *Nevertheless, basically we say that uniformity in doctrine is absolute.*

II) Our second consideration is uniformity in spirit. Maybe

these two points are so closely related that I should not have divided them. However, there is a difference as we think of uniformity in spirit. John 10:16 is a very familiar Scripture where Jesus said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” *That is uniformity in spirit — one fold and one shepherd.*

In John 17:21–23 (the previous verses) Jesus was praying in particular for His disciples. In verse 20 He says, “Neither pray I for these alone . . .” (or for the disciples) “but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” or through the preaching and teaching of the disciples. “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: (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.” That certainly speaks of unity or uniformity in spirit, does it not?

The uniformity noted here is

profession here in the first part of verse 21 “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.” We know that was a perfect unity and uniformity between the Father and the Son. We are not yet in such absolute uniformity of spirit, but we work at it. We are striving for that type of unity. *It is our goal to be unified and to have a unity of the Spirit like the Father and Son did.*

Romans 12:3–5 says, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (4) For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: (5) So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” That also speaks of the uniformity in spirit, does it not? *Uniformity in doctrine and in spirit requires this element of equality or the element of equality.* Verse 3 tells us that we are not to think too highly of ourselves.

Verse 10 says, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” It is the practice of being in our right place and in viewing our brethren and

sisters properly, also preferring them above us. The element of equality is certainly involved here as we think of uniformity in doctrine and in spirit.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1–13.

The Spirit works in every believer and produces a oneness of faith. It is oneness in knowledge, in our views of sin, in our views of the grace of God, our views of Christ, the world and so forth. We strive for verse 13 that “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”

Those verses certainly show us the unity, or the uniformity of the Spirit. Another Scripture is Ephesians 4:1–4, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.” Yes, there is a oneness here that we understand, a uniformity in spirit here, a oneness in faith, and so forth, so that we can experience the oneness that is even described here in verse 13, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the

measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Uniformity in spirit.

One more Scripture. Philippians 1:27, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” Philippians 4:2 says, “I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.” Uniformity in doctrine and in spirit is certainly is very important.

III) That is the background and I might say the foundation to what I plan to share now as we consider the third consideration of *uniformity in our practice*. I said a while ago that in doctrine we believe in absolute uniformity. We do not have an absolute uniformity in our practice, in our application of Bible principle. Rather, we work with what we call a “relative” uniformity. We should immediately recognize the danger of relativism. However, we have accepted this danger so that we have what we believe is a more practical uniformity in practice. I hope I did not lose you through all that.

We do not have an absolute uniformity in our practices rela-

tively, and relativism is always dangerous. We believe we can face this danger and yet remain reasonably unified and uniform in our practice. This is the burden of the message that we, in this relative uniformity, are not led astray. We need to be reminded of the blessing and the benefit of uniformity in practice and that does not lead us to unScriptural diversity.

What was the household phrase in the experience of apostasy? I am not sure but I think I hear brethren say that it was “Unity in diversity.” Was that not sort of the household phrase? When you pursue unity in diversity, you simply have everyone doing what is “right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25) in the end, and yet be unified in spirit perhaps? That is not what we want. We want a uniformity in our practice that is safe. We do not want to fall victim to relativism that will lead us astray.

Nevertheless, there are some areas where we practice an absolute uniformity. Our sisters are all veiled — every one of them. That is absolute. We make no exceptions. Our brethren wear the regulation coat every one of them. That is absolute. We have segregated seating in all our congregations. Therefore, in that sense that is absolute — an

absolute uniformity. We have communion twice a year in all our churches. That is absolute uniformity. However, there are many areas in which there is not absolute uniformity but rather a relative one.

1) First of all, as we consider uniformity, *I want to consider uniformity in social status*. The Bible has something to say about this. As we think of uniformity in our social status let us look at James 2:1–9, “My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. (2) For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; (3) And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: (4) Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? (5) Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? (6) But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? (7) Do not they blaspheme that wor-

thy name by the which ye are called? (8) If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: (9) But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.”

Uniformity in social status. We do not have the elite and then the common among us. We are brethren. This is emphasized in our Sunday School lessons. We are brethren. We are one in Christ. Again, I am blessed as I consider our practice of Biblical separation from the world and nonconformity. It helps us in that matter of uniformity in our social status. In this world social status quickly forms social cliques. They develop because of that status. There are those with expensive cars, outlandish expensive homes, and the abundance of sporting equipment, the latest in fashion, the mountain retreats that we have. (The list could go on). That causes status cliques.

However, as Christians we are one in Christ. I am again reminded that as Christians, as we experience and practice the “all things” (Matthew 28:20) of the Bible, the combination of Bible principles make a whole. Therefore, the doctrine of separation with the world, the doctrine of nonconformity, all enter into

this area of having an equal social status. There are not the elite and common among us. We practice a uniformity in this area of social status.

2) *Unity in financial status.* This is very closely related and is somewhat relative. Nevertheless, we should have a reasonable uniformity in this area, at least, as it affects our lifestyle. When we think of lifestyle, it is very close to social status. That is why I say these two points are very closely related. There should be a uniformity in the expressions of our financial status. The level of wealth should not influence our lifestyle. It should rather influence our giving. The level of wealth definitely should influence our giving rather than our lifestyle. Uniformity in financial status.

“Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase . . .” Then what? What does the Bible say? “Set not your heart upon them” (Psalm 62:10). Uniformity in the lifestyle is reflected in financial uniformity.

3) *Uniformity in generations.* We have referred to a generation gap and avoiding a generation gap. Therefore, we want to consider uniformity in the generations — between generations. This is an area where we proba-

bly face some challenges. We have all seen it. We see it at funerals. You see the grandparents. You see the parents. You see the children. You see the grandchildren. You see the progression into worldliness. How do we avoid a generation gap? How can we maintain uniformity between generations? How do we avoid it in our families? How do we avoid this generation gap in our churches?

Maybe I should say it from the positive side. How can we maintain uniformity between generations? A) First of all, it begins with right thinking on the part of us as parents. We need to think right as parents. If we think right on this issue, we will reject the philosophy that young people will sow their wild oats. We will reject the idea that after all “We are only young once, so let them have their fling and they will settle down.” We reject that when we think right. It is so needful if we will be unified between generations.

We reject the idea that we do not expect young people to be spiritual. That is the idea that they will simply not be as spiritual as older people. We do know that young Christians are immature, but they are not carnal. They are spiritual. They need to be spiritual. There are levels of

maturity. We understand that. Nevertheless, we reject the idea that young people simply will be carnal. We reject that. Therefore, it is so important that we think right as parents.

B) Another area is that there simply not much space between acceptable social activities and behaviour for young people as it is for adults. There is simply not much space between those two. There may be some differences. We know that young people are not involved in different types of social activity as adults. However, as far as acceptable behaviour and conduct there simply is very little space (or even maybe I should say no space) between young people and adults. This idea of uniformity and generation gap hinges on how we as parents view this issue.

C) Another area that is affected is how we dress our little boys and girls. We know that as a church we have not spelled out details in this area. There are principles alluded to in our understood standards. Our little boys and girls should simply look like they belong to us. That is what they should look like. They should belong to us. This idea of uniformity between generations begins in this area as well and how we view the differ-

ence in that and how small a difference should be.

We understand that there is a difference. Our little boys do not wear the regulation coat and our little girls do not wear cape dresses and, of course, not the veiling. Nevertheless, we should have a practice that our little boys look like they belong to us and not belong to some liberal or even worldly parent.

4) *As we think of uniformity in practice, I want to give a few thoughts related to uniformity and nonconformity.* Here again, our practice is a relative practice rather than an absolute uniformity as it comes to nonconformity in attire. It is a bit relative. We can all think of church groups that have a much more absolute uniformity in this area than we do. As I said earlier, we are willing to face the dangers of relativism so that we have what we believe is probably a more practical uniformity.

As I think of uniformity in attire, we know we like using our sisters for an example. Our sisters' dresses are made across the same pattern. However, there is not necessarily absolutely uniform in materials, the patterns, and even the colours. Therefore, in that sense we have a relative uniformity. However, you know that in the pattern by which they

are made we ask for uniformity, and we have that. We expect a plain cape dress including the maternity. To have a safe, relative uniformity we simply must be careful that in this we are not too far apart.

When it comes to patterns and colours even though they are made across the same pattern, we want to be careful that we do not have too much variation. That calls for drawing some lines and we say, "This acceptable and this is not." We should be aware that the Bible school has been on the "cutting edge" maybe in this area to give guidance to our church. Maybe it seems like we get a little legalistic sometimes. How should a situation like the Bible school be administrated? We want to maintain a safe, relative uniformity in this area. Therefore, we get a little "legalistic." When patterns, or the designs or patterns on the dresses are larger than a quarter, we say they cannot be worn in Bible school. Is that legalistic? It is a way of maintaining a safe uniformity.

With regard to our sisters' veiling, we might say that there is a sense in which we have an absolute uniformity because we have rejected the alternate styles of veiling and we have agreed, and we will stay by the tradition-

al veiling. However, there is not complete absolute uniformity because they are made in slightly different ways sometimes too, of course, to fit the person. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the uniformity in the Christian woman's veiling is rather absolute.

With regard to the plain suit, the regulation coat or the plain suit, there is a sense in which that is absolute, because we make no exceptions to that. Every member of the church brethren wears the regulation coat. Therefore, in that sense it is absolute. However, some may have black ones. Some may have blue ones, maybe dark grey. Nevertheless, we want a sufficient uniformity that we can eliminate the objectionable — the light- coloured trousers and suits. We want a uniformity that while not absolute is yet safe and reasonable.

Another area that I think of is on our brethren. This is practically an absolute uniformity. That is our position on the traditional tapered hair cut rather than the faddish block cut that is so popular in the world. We have agreed that we will stay with the traditional tapered hair cut on brethren. Therefore, in that sense there is we might say an absolute uniformity. However, there is

again some variation. Some may part their hair on the one side and others on the other side. There are some varied ways in that so there may not be an absolute uniformity. Nevertheless, we want to again strive for a consistent, relative uniformity in our practice.

IV) *In closing, How does uniformity help us?* How does uniformity in doctrine, uniformity in spirit, and uniformity in practice help us? 1) *It unifies us in the same spirit.* It unifies us in conviction. It works the other way around too. When there is diversity in practice that brings a diversity in conviction. When there is a diversity in conviction there will be a diversity in practice. Therefore, what does it do for us? It unifies us in spirit. It unifies us in conviction. It works like that. I know it does. It has worked like that in my life and I am sure it does in yours also. It unifies us.

2) *It fosters a kindred spirit among us when we have a reasonable uniformity.* I was in Guatemala for a season some time ago. I still remember the feeling when we set foot in the Miami airport and we met Americans. They could speak English. There is a kindred spirit, even though we were not one in spirit. We are not one in spirit

as far as the Spirit of God, but there was a kinship there because they were Americans like we were and they spoke English like we do. We believe it fosters this kindred spirit.

There is a practice that we have that you probably do not think about how it brings a kindred spirit, somewhat a uniformity among us. That is the practice of placing Gospel signs at the end of our lanes. Did you ever think about that when you are travelling? When you see a Gospel sign you think “I wonder who lives there? It must be one of our church people.” This is not absolute. We know there are some other churches that have also used these Gospel signs. Nevertheless, if we find that sign at the end of their lane, we know there is a kindred spirit stirred in our hearts, is it not? I find it that way. While we are on that subject, I would encourage all of us to have Gospel signs at the end of our lane.

3) *Uniformity promotes a loyalty to a common cause.* As it works out in our lives, in our families, in our churches it is the cause of Christ and His Church. It promotes this loyalty. I do not need to remind you that businesses have discovered this long ago. Uniformity in their outward appearance brings loyalty among

their employees. It is an established fact. It brings a uniformity in their appearance. It brings a loyalty. It brings an identity. That all applies to Christian experience also.

Some public school districts have dress codes in place, and some have school uniforms where every girl and every boy, the girls all dress alike, the boys all dress alike. They wear uniforms. It does not take a wise man to know why that works. That makes for better schools. For one thing it takes away all the competition of trying to outdo the other one in outlandish attire. It takes it all away. The uniformity that we promote in our outward practices. That competition is taken away. There is simply not the peer pressure to dress outlandishly.

In our schools we have not adopted an absolute uniformity in our attire and probably we never will. However, I would say this, it would not take much to persuade me that maybe it would be all right that we have an absolute uniformity in that area. We probably never will, and I am not saying that I am on the “bandwagon” to promote that. Nevertheless, there is something about that which simply makes some sense.

4) *Uniformity helps us to be*

a more consistent witness to the world. You know “when they have seen one they have seen them all,” you might say. The uniformity that we promote certainly is a strong testimony to the world.

I should say this yet in closing. As I promoted this idea of uniformity I am not here suggesting that because we do this as a plain church that we are the only right ones. We know there are some church groups that do not emphasize uniformity in practice like we do, and I am not passing

judgment on them. I will say this yet though. I verily believe that our practice is good for us and it is Scriptural and we want to maintain it.

Again, if I may remind you, the burden of this message is that we find a safe uniformity, and a relative uniformity. We need to accept the fact that we have accepted a relative uniformity rather than an absolute, but that we have a safe relative uniformity that will protect us from the world. May God help us to be faithful.

Scripture References

Numbers		Romans		Ephesians	
14:3	126	12:3-5	132	4:1	128
15:32	125	12:10	132	4:2	128
15:34	125	15:6	119	4:1-4	133
	Judges		1 Corinthians	4:4-7	128
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62:10	135	1:10	119	1:27	119, 133
	Proverbs	1:10, 11	131	2:2	119
6:19	120	1:13	122	4:2	133
	Matthew	3:1-5	123		1 Timothy
5:9	120	12:1-13	133	1:3, 4	130
28:20	135		2 Corinthians		James
	John	12:18	24	2:1-9	134
17:21-23	132	12:19, 20a	124		1 Peter
	Acts	12:20b, 21	125	3:7	120
5:8	126	13:11	119, 131	5:8	119
23:15, 21	127		Galatians		2 John
		1:6-9	129	9-11	130

From the Previous Issue:

Vision Today for the Church of Tomorrow

From a message by the late Benjamin Eshbach

Sunday, June 22, 1997

Valley View Mennonite Church

II

REFUGEES

The Flight from House and Home (continued)

It was a pleasant summer night. But near the door there was a cool breeze, and therefore Judith went back to her parents, seating herself on the floor at the feet of her mother, leaning her head against her mother's knees. The mother embraced her darling daughter tenderly, caressing and kissing her. Judith felt big drops of tears falling on her face. It pained her very much to see her beloved mother in tears.

"You are crying, Mama, dear?" she asked softly. "Do You know, while I was standing there at the door a few minutes ago I was thinking of our forefathers in Egypt and what they had to go through. They were at one time refugees just as we are now. I was comparing our flight from home with their experiences. And I do believe, Mama, that the great and loving God who helped our people in their time of distress will help us, too. Don't you think so too, Mama?"

"I have never thought of it yet,

Judith, dear," replied the mother. "Papa, did you hear what Judith is talking about?" she turned laughingly to her husband, who sat near by with his head wearily resting upon his hands. "She is comparing our situation with the emigration of the Jews from Egypt, and she believes that Jehovah is going to bring us too into a land where milk and honey flow."

Mr. Weinberg could not keep from laughing. "Well, Judith, you are always our joy and a messenger of good news, but now you are even a good prophet. Well, well, you are thinking already of milk and honey, and only a few days ago while walking on the dusty highway our Judith was repeating more than anyone else, 'If only we had a drink of good, cold water.' Do you remember?" he asked, looking with tender love at his oldest daughter. She looked at him with a happy, bright smile.

"Yes, Papa, but do you remem-

ber that the Jews were asking for water in the wilderness, that they even murmured against Moses, and in spite of it, they got milk and honey? We are in a much similar condition, and we ask for water, and Jehovah will send us milk. I believe it, Daddy!" she added seriously. I have been watching you and Mother while you were talking. You both were so sad that it made my heart very sorry for you. Why should we worry so much?

Look here, we are all healthy and strong. We will start to work, and the Lord God will help us, and everything will be fine!"

"You are reasoning differently from Mother and me," said the father. "If we believe as you do, then of course all will be well. Mother and I were discouraged, but now you have strengthened us greatly through your faith."

The two younger girls had joined the group in the meantime, and both said in one voice, "Yes, Dad, we will work, too, to make a living."

"I am going to be your sales-girl in the store," declared Sara, the youngest of the three.

"And I will be a dressmaker. I like to do sewing," announced Ruth.

"Well, if we have to decide our

occupation right here, then I will tell you, too, what I am going to do. Because I am very fond of little children, I think I will choose the profession of a teacher," added Judith, happily.

For over a week the Weinbergs had been on the way. First was the four days' walk, then the ride on freight trains, interchanging with weary tiresome hours of waiting at various railroad stations. But finally they reached their destination. Mr. Weinberg had sent a telegraphic message to some of his friends in G—, announcing their arrival. These friends had come to meet them at the station at their arrival, accepting the homeless refugees in a most hearty and friendly way.

The Weinberg family adapted itself very soon to its new environment of this city, which was largely populated by Jews. With the financial aid of his friends, Mr. Weinberg soon opened a dry goods store and when the winter came into the land, he found the family in nice, comfortable quarters, well supplied with all they needed. The three girls continued their education in local institutions of learning. The whole family felt quite at home among their friends in the business world of G—.

Book Reprint

A Talk With Church Members

INTRODUCTORY.

My Christian Friends: Whatever may be said concerning our likes and dislikes, our aims or our names, one thing is true of us all. If we are true Christians, we are all churchmembers. If we are members of the Church of which Jesus Christ is the Head — the visible Church which God has instituted as the temporary home of the saints on earth, we have especial cause for rejoicing. We shall not question the sincerity of any in connecting themselves with any religious organization, but shall consider the fact that being churchmembers is evidence that we mean to be in the service of the Lord.

TWO KINGDOMS.

We are taught in the Word that there are two great kingdoms, and that all people are subjects of one or the other of them. At the head of one kingdom is God; at the head of the other is Satan. As free agents, we are to say in whose kingdom we will serve. God has set His price upon a human soul; so has Satan. To contrast these prices, let us imagine ourselves upon a boundless plain, upon which is assembled an innumerable company, com-

posed of the whole human family. We hear a voice that rings out loud and clear:

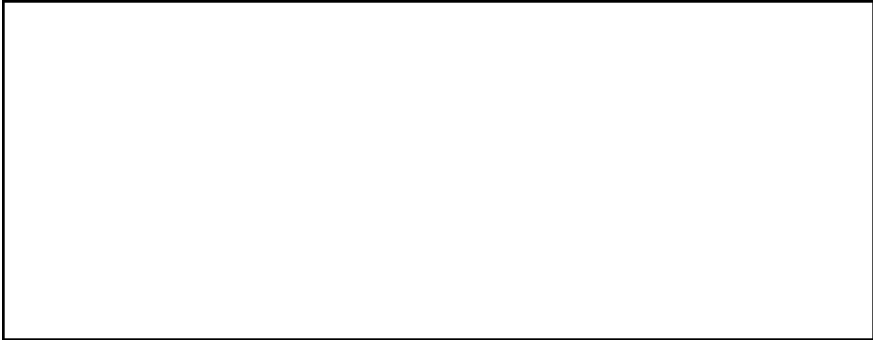
“Almighty God, creator of the universe, Ruler of heaven and earth, what is Thy price for a human soul?”

Back from the throne of heaven comes the answer: “My price is already paid. I sent My beloved Son into the world, and freely offered Him as a ransom for the sins of man. His blood has cancelled the debt, and salvation is now free to all who will accept. They who accept this good as the price for their redemption shall enter My service, be freed from the pangs of a guilty conscience, have the burden of sin removed and the conflicts of life lightened by the privilege of leaning upon the strong arm of their Saviour, enjoy the exercise of the noblest faculties of the mind, have their hearts thrilled with hopes of immortal glory, and finally reap the rewards of the faithful in an eternal haven of rest.

“Satan, thou vile deceiver, thou pretended angel of light, thou roaring lion, what is thy price for a human soul?”

Like the voice of a thousand demons comes the satanic

The Pulpit Exchange



response: "I lure my subjects on with visions which are never real and with promises which I never hope to fulfill. I draw the picture of Christianity as dark as I can make it. I have a lot of my followers in the church so that the world may know that there is no advantage in belonging to church. I allow my subjects to consume themselves by revelling in their sinful lusts. I rob my victims of rest, of health, of morals, of honor, of self-respect, and finally, when there is nothing about them worth robbing, I pick

up their miserable forms, and cast them into a burning lake of fire and fury, where in shame and remorse and disgrace they suffer the intensest agonies and the pangs and torments of an endless hell !"

You say that you have accepted the former of these propositions, and that you are now in the service of your Lord and Master. God be praised for that; and may He give you grace that this service may be pleasant for you and profitable for others.

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