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**Like-Minded Toward One Another**

**2 Corinthians 13:11-14**

*July 24, 2005*

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**2 Corinthians 13:11-14** - <sup>11</sup> Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. <sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. <sup>13</sup> All the saints greet you. <sup>14</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.[NKJV]

❖ **Introduction**

The command we have before us this morning is probably one of the most difficult to obey and simultaneously one of the most destructive when not obeyed. As we will consider, we have devised all manner of ways to try to persuade ourselves that we are indeed obeying the command but we find that, over and over again, our fleshly efforts fail. As we look around the Christian church today it is obvious that we have divisions and we even have divisions here in our local congregation. Some like the music and others don't. Some like the preaching and others don't. Some like the CREC and others don't. Some like bagels and others don't. What are we to do? Live like Christians.

❖ **We Devise Unbiblical Responses to the Command**

- .. **Ignore the Command** – “Surely the world is a much more complicated place than when Paul was inspired to write these verses. If only He would have known a post-Reformational world, he wouldn't have given us this command.” One way to ignore the command is to persuade ourselves that it doesn't mean what it says.
- .. **The Old “If everybody would just see things my way, then we'd be like-minded” Technique** – This is a very natural temptation that we have because we have difficulty understanding why others don't see things as plainly through our eyes as we do. The answer is that they aren't looking through *our* eyes, nor are they required to. But we are all required to turn to the pages of Scripture and allow our views to be judged *there*.  
  
Another form of this can also come from those who rally behind a particular teacher and take everything said to be true simply because the teacher is reported to have taught it. On the flip side, there are those who attempt to make a name for themselves by simply refusing to believe anything that teacher says. The point is that God has given us teachers and yet we are still called to be students of the Scriptures. We are not called to argue over particular teachers instead we are called to submit ourselves to the Scriptures and determine if what we believe is supported *there*. If the issue at hand is not a Biblical issue, then in disagreements the rule remains grace and charity.
- .. **Battle to the Death** – This too, is a very tempting solution because on the surface it appears that we are submitting ourselves to the Scriptures. We hear the command to strive together for unity of mind and then the emphasis becomes the striving and we forget the command to love one another. The striving needs to be faithful and humble and is never at the expense of destroying fellowship with a brother or sister. The noble cause of unity does not justify the means of over-exuberant striving. While we are called to strive together we still are to consider others more highly than ourselves.
- .. **“Let's separate ourselves from those divisive people”** – Another name for this could be “shrinking the circle.” We tend to gather around ourselves those who have the same beliefs or emphases and this way we feel unified. When we look around at those Christians who don't have the same distinctions that we do we assume that they must be the problem and so we separate from them. This is one part of the Body of Christ tearing itself away from another part. As this process

continues you will eventually have these tiny, little one-person-sized circles of unity.

- “ **Latitudinarianism** – This is the ditch that is opposite of the “shrinking the circle” ditch. This “ism” is characterized by those who are tired of striving and have determined that absolutes are bad things and so then every thought becomes viable. Since the goal is to make the circle as large as possible (at the expense of the Scriptures) they lose their ability to discern good from evil and they are unable to engage in discussions in a genuine and gracious manner. To them, all matters are trivial. But in fact, there are monumental truths in the Scriptures that are worthy of striving for like-mindedness. At times in the history of the church, there have been times when God has resolved major theological points and, generally speaking, the church has grown in unity (e.g. circumcision, deity of Christ, the Trinity). But latitudinarianism is tired of talking, refuses to study and seeks to agree to disagree. But where do we get the idea that this is ok? Instead we go to our graves striving for like-mindedness by faith.
- “ **Pluralism** – A form of this “ism” can creep into the church where it is taught that everyone has a divine right to his very own opinion. This happens when we refuse to correct one another because we are afraid to offend. Certainly there is a difference between saying that someone should be persecuted for his opinions and saying that every opinion is created equal.

#### ❖ **God Commands Us to Be Like-Minded**

##### ***Romans 15:1-6***

- “ Again, as we saw last week in the command to love one another, the Scriptures command us to be like-minded. We are commanded to *think the same thing*. How is this possible? Once again, God provides that which he commands. Our tendency is to think that certain things are our jobs and other things are God’s. This is our department and that department is God’s responsibility—wrong, *everything* is God’s work. He is the Lord; He is *our Lord*.
- “ Notice that the God of *comfort and patience* is the God of the *patience and comfort* of the Scriptures. These are the attributes we are in need of and where do they come from? Only from Him and His Scriptures.
- “ As we have considered previously, what God commands that He also provides. The God of comfort and peace grants to us that we are like-minded toward one another—this is a *gift* from God. If we see a lack of unity in the church at large, but more importantly in our own congregation (and we do) then this is because God is chastising us by withholding the gift from us. Why is the chastising occurring? We cannot divine God’s motives or purposes. But the only proper response is confession of sin and repentance. We have wrangled with each other beyond faithful striving. We have whispered about each other in our circles. We have “Bulverized” one another’s opinions. In other situations, we have refused to strive together in faith and instead divided ourselves from one another.
- “ In his prayer, Paul is teaching us that God pours out like-mindedness as He sees fit. We must turn to Him, confess our haughtiness and then ask Him to pour out His peace upon us. If God commands unity and we want unity but don’t have unity, what must we do? Pray and ask Him to teach us love, peace and unity.
- “ Notice also that when He grants this unity, He does so through the hope of the Scriptures. When God gives true unity, we will be united *around the Scriptures*.
- “ Why does God grant this like-mindedness? So that with one mind and one mouth we might glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our motives are tossed out. Our private agendas are re-written. The reason why God commands us to be like-minded is because when we are, God is glorified. Our primary motivation in asking God for unity is not because disunity is uncomfortable or unpleasant. Our primary motivation in being unified is God’s glory.

#### ❖ **Carry Your Convictions with Humility**

##### ***Romans 12:14-16***

- “ Again, Paul here commands us to “be of the same mind toward one another.” But in this admonition there are warnings regarding our behavior that accompany the command. The first is a warning about setting our mind on “high things”. There are certain topics or doctrines that, if not handled properly, tend to divide Christians. The church is not a theology club where we sit around trying to impress one another with multi-syllabic Christianese. The Christian church is not the Areopagus

where we gather to hear the novel theology of the day. If these lofty theologies are not helping you to love the Lord or love your wife or your children or your neighbor then why be distracted? This is not a prohibition of academic rigor or theological study. But Christianity is very much a rubber-meets-the-road religion. It is no good to have the most intricate and complicated theologies in our heads if the Word of God is not sanctifying our lives.

- “ One feature of those who love the “high things” inappropriately is a refusal to associate with the lowly. There are those who would rather have a pontification gathering to discuss the jots and tittles of Scripture and yet neglect those who have some of the most basic and yet profound questions of the faith.
- “ Another characteristic of the lovers of “high things” is an over-estimate of the wisdom of their own opinions. All of us hold the particular convictions that what we do because we believe them to be true. This is to be expected. However, we must remember our fallibility and that the truths of Scripture would be true whether we, in particular, were ever born or not. We must also remember that the Scriptures also teach us that we can be self-deceived. In fact, there are numerous things about yourself that you don’t see nor understand. We must remember our joint utter depravity apart from Christ and not improperly elevate the status of our opinions.

#### ❖ **Conclusion**

- “ If you find that you are in disagreement with those to whom you are connected, the first thing to determine the nature of the disagreement. Is this really something that is more about our individual preferences or persuasions than it is about biblical principle?
- “ If the issue is about something regarding God’s word, then put on tender mercies and humility; be prepared to be corrected; pray that God would grant like-mindedness and then open the Scriptures. Do a bible study.
- “ If your discussion gets tense or consuming then one or more parties are thinking too highly of themselves. If you can’t simultaneously love your brother and discuss the issue then you are disqualified from the discussion.

*Preached by Brett Baker*