

# Basis for unity

Text: 2 John 1:9-11

## Introduction

- A. In this short little book of 2 John, John is deeply concerned that we abide in the truth. The word "truth" floods John's salutation in 2 John.
- B. Truth is of course no other than Jesus Christ (John 14:6), the Word of God is truth (John 17:17) and the Spirit of truth must guide us into fellowship with other Christians. The truth of Christ is to test what we hear, it is to guide our personal lives, it is the basis of unity and it is what binds us together as the church.
- C. John is deeply concerned with whom we have unity and fellowship with in the local congregation as well as abroad, but his main focus is locally. There is nothing wrong with allowing unbelievers to attend our fellowship, worship, Bible study, or even inviting them into our home for the purpose of learning the truth. But they and we must understand that true Christian unity and fellowship can only be had as we abide in the truth and the truth abides in us.
- D. What does the Bible say is the basis for a congregation's unity with one another?

## Body

- I. Christian unity is based on our connection to Christ. 2 John 1:9.
  - A. All Christians must believe in Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died, was buried, and resurrected (1 Cor. 15:1-4).
    1. This is what John means by abiding in the doctrine. The teaching, the Gospel. This is the truth he is talking about! Not that Jesus was a good teacher, prophet, or religious leader, but that He was the Son of God, Truth deity, God among us!
    2. Jesus stated in John 8:24, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."
    3. John is reminding us of the danger and evil of departure from gospel; it is in reality a departure from God himself and a departure of fellowship and unity with one another.
    4. 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."
    5. Christian unity and fellowship is based on Christ and Christ alone.
  - B. Second all Christians must devote ourselves to living as Jesus commanded. Mt. 28:18-20.
    1. Many times I have been asked how can Christians be untied when we all have our opinions, different experiences, and own interruptions.
      - a. Rom. 14:1-4, 22, "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him... So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God."
    2. We must be like-minded regarding the essentials to our Christian faith. We must build on the foundations of faith and then work towards other issues.
    3. Paul provides us with a list of the essentials we must believe in (Eph. 4:4-5).
      - a. One body (One Church).
      - b. One Spirit (One Holy Spirit).
      - c. One Lord (We believe that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior).
      - d. One Faith.
      - e. One Baptism (Meaning that we are baptized in water for the remission of sins).

- f. One God (There is one God, yet there are 3 persons in the Godhead).
- C. As brothers and sisters, we should believe alike regarding the essentials to our faith. We should be like minded on what it takes to be saved. We should be like minded that the Bible is the Word of God. If we do, we will have unity. If we don't, then we will have many problems.
1. Christian faith and congregational unity stands or falls on the basis of Jesus' deity. If he is only man, he cannot save us no matter how gifted or unique he might be. If he is not who he claimed to be, he isn't even a good man. If we are true to Christ, we must defend His claims.
  2. 2 John 1:4-6, "It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love."
- II. Christian unity is based on excluding some. 2 John 1:10
- A. This sound strange to us but John points out that when we start including just anyone who comes along then our unity is in jeopardy and we are not living our faith in Christ. True Christianity is to be based on the truth of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures any thing contrary to this causes disunity.
1. Paul makes a very similar statement in Tit 3:10-11, "As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.
  2. Paul as well as John would not support the idea that all religious teachings are true in one way or another, and we should not be critical just as long as people are sincere. We must exclude someone if they go against Christ.
    - a. This is often different than what modern people say for the sake of unity.
    - b. Some would put unity before the teachings of the Bible, yet John and Paul as well as the whole New Testament disagree with this idea that is so common today.
  3. John saw a deadly difference between truth and error. He would not tolerate error. He would not tolerate those spreading error in the fellowship of believers.
- B. We must understand what John is saying in John's excluding of the false teacher.
1. John is not saying that we should not be hospitable to non-Christians. Again there is nothing wrong with allowing unbelievers to attend our fellowship, worship, Bible study, or even inviting them into our home for the purpose of teaching the truth to them.
  2. We must also be careful not to divorce ourselves from the erring in such a way that we will never have a chance to lead them back to Christ.
  3. Friendship evangelism is the surest way to win the world.
  4. What John is teaching us is don't put yourself in a situation where we allow those who cause discord and teach false teaching to influence you and your children.
    - a. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, reminds, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing,

and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

- b. During ancient times hospitality was more prevalent than it is today. Members of the church would open their homes to traveling evangelist. John warns them against extending hospitality to false teachers. We must not encourage those against Christ in any way to help them spread their message or influence other Christian especially if they are new or weak in the faith.

C. How could we apply this today?

1. Watch who influences your thinking, teaching, living, and your spirituality. Ask yourself do I influence them or do they influence me?
  - a. 1 Cor. 15:33.
  - b. Phil. 4:8-9
2. We must be careful not to put ourselves, family, or other Christians in a situation where our Christianity will be lost. How?
  - a. Chose friends and surround your family with people that will influence you and your children with Christ and Christianity.
  - b. Marry a Christian, someone who is in agreement in your beliefs, worships with you, studying the Bible, and helps you with raising your children in the Christian faith. The church is being hurt greatly, just as the Children of Israel were hurt in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah because their children were marrying those outside God's Law. Who we marry can make or break our faith.
  - c. Chose your job wisely, chose a career where your Christianity will not be hindered. Such as going to worship, Bible study, and being involved in the life of the church. Where you can be involved with daily Bible study and prayer. I realize this is hard and maybe to late for so but we can teach this to our children and grandchildren. I am also not saying for us all to be preachers or preachers wives (although this not a bad thing). Chose a job that will not hinder you for living out the Christian faith. There are some jobs that a Christian just can not do!
  - d. Chose to use your free time wisely. You can be influence your Christianity for good or evil by TV show we watch, where we go on vacation, hobbies, reading, or where you shop.
3. Christian unity is based on excluding some people and some things from our lives.

III. Christian unity is based on the command to love one another.

- A. 4 times in this short letter of 2 John he mentions love. In our endeavor to maintain unity, we must always keep Christ and love at the center. We must be slow to exclude, in fact Paul in Titus states to warn divisive person twice.
  1. We must also understand that John is talking about someone who is trying to destroy the faith of Jesus Christ. We must realize he is not talking about just any old disagreement on some issues.
  2. We can't go around and kicking everyone out of the church, get fight'en mad when someone disagrees with us, and leave.
  3. We can't expect everyone, even in the best of situation, to agree on every subject. Although centering on Christ and looking at things with the eyes of Christ we can come to a fuller understanding of what the Bible teaches.
    - a. Take for my eyeglasses without them things look foggy, but put them on and things clear up 100%.

- b. The same with our dealings with one another, we must see each other through the eyes of Jesus.
    - c. To many time we taken our eyes of Jesus and tried to deal with an issue not like Jesus would but like the world.
  4. Jesus shows us acceptances, listening to, and respecting others. Differences of opinion need not cause division. They can be a source of learning and richness in our relationships with one another and in Christ.
- B. A few years ago, a fourteen year old girl named Shannon Smith was shot to death in her own back yard. A bullet lodged in her brain. Though already tragic and horrific, the story was made more tragic by the inexplicable nature of the shooting. Police, judging from the trajectory made by the entry wound, concluded that the bullet fell from the sky. Somewhere nearby, some unknown person had fired a gun for no known reason. The bullet completed its path of travel inside an unsuspecting teenager. Tragic, indeed!
  1. Who fired the gun and why? No one knows. Someone aimlessly fired a weapon. A child died and parents were left to mourn her loss. It was all so unnecessary and avoidable!
  2. Christians are a special people:
    - a. A God-possessed, holy group (1 Pet. 2:9).
    - b. The world sees Christians (Matt. 5:16).
    - c. The world reacts to the children of God, either by "glorifying" (Matt. 5:16) or "blaspheming" (2 Sam. 12:14) The Lord.
    - d. Christians are either transformed from worldliness or conformed to it (Rom. 12:2).
    - e. Conformity to the world carries tragic consequences.
  3. People watch what we do, they hear what we say, and evaluating our judgments. They see how we act with one another, in our business, and as a church. They see what we wear, how we talk, where we go, and with what we entertain ourselves may seem harmless or at least harmful only to us.
    - a. Yet, sometimes we aimlessly fire and eternally wound another's soul by our influence, or disunity with one another.
    - b. The man or woman who fired that gun may not realize even know what they did with one "harmless" squeeze of a trigger. Maybe they will not know on this side of time. Just so, we may be shocked on that day to realize how many or exactly whom we influenced.
- C. We're on a spiritual battlefield (Eph. 6). Let's be careful not to shoot at the wrong side! Not exclude the wrong person! We may wind up doing harm to the very people we're been commissioned to save. Let's watch our aim.
  1. 2 John 1:8, "**Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for...**"
  2. Sometimes in our eagerness to exclude we have lost the very thing we have worked for, we have become what we hate.
  3. There is a lot of truth in the phrase: "When those who are called to fish don't fish, they fight."
    - a. "When energy intended to be used outside is used inside, the result is explosive. Instead of casting nets, we cast stones. Instead of extending helping hands, we point accusing fingers. Instead of being fishers of the lost, we become critics of the saved. Rather than helping the hurting, we hurt the helpers.
    - b. "Split churches. Poor examples. Broken hearts. Legalistic wars. And, sadly, poor go unfed, confused go uncounseled, and lost go unreached.

- c. When those who are called to fish don't fish, they fight. But note the other side: When those who are called to fish, fish—they flourish (Max Lucado, In the Eye of Storm).

In closing

- A. John in this very short letter gives us our basis for unity; the truth, (Christ) and Love for one another in Christ, and this involve careful exclusion of those who go against Christ and his teaching.
- B. This morning don't be excluded from Christ any longer. Christ as well as member of His church invite you today to accept Jesus Christ's forgiveness of sin by confessing your faith in Him, repenting of sin, and being baptized. If you have don't that and have not kept Christ at the center of your life, exclude yourself from the people and things that go against Christ, or have not be truly loving in your life we want to pray for you and invite you to be restored to Christ this very day. Come as we stand and sing.

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