

"Unity – Which Team Are You On?"

Sunday, April 17, 2016

Elder Jim Piekunka

© 2016 Prayers Ministries, Inc., dba River of Life Community Church

**Opening Thoughts**

**Unity is commanded by God**

**Unity brings the church power from God and God's blessing.**

**Satan brings division to the church to weaken it and to destroy it.**

**Hezekiah's father was evil, closed up the temple, & set up false altars.**

"Ahaz gathered together the furnishings from the temple of God and took them away. **He shut the doors of the LORD's temple and set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem.** In every town in Judah he built high places to burn sacrifices to other gods and provoked the LORD, the God of his fathers, to anger" 2 Chronicles 28:24-25 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

**This takes place after Hezekiah restored the temple and priesthood.**

"**Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel...**At the king's command, couriers went throughout Israel and Judah with letters from the king and from his officials, which read: "People of Israel, **return to the LORD**, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, **that he may return to you who are left**, who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. Do not be like your fathers and brothers, who were unfaithful to the LORD, the God of their fathers, so that he made them an object of horror, as you see. **Do not be stiff-necked**, as your fathers were; submit to the LORD. **Come to the sanctuary**, which he has consecrated forever. **Serve the LORD** your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. **If you return to the LORD, then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land**, for the LORD your God is gracious and compassionate. **He will not turn his face from you if you return to him.**" The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun, but the people scorned and ridiculed them. Nevertheless, some men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun **humbled themselves** and went to Jerusalem. Also in Judah **the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the LORD.** A very large crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. **They removed the altars in Jerusalem and cleared away the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley**" 2 Chronicles 30:1-14 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

**"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!** It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. **For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore**" Psalm 133:1-3 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

**Jesus prayed for our unity with God and each other. Why?**

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.** May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given

them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. **May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them** even as you have loved me” John 17:20-23 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

#### **Why did Paul pray for a spirit of unity over God’s people?**

“**May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity** among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Accept one another**, then, just as Christ accepted you, **in order to bring praise to God**” Romans 15:5-7 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.** There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all...It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, **to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ**” Ephesians 4:1-13 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

#### **Paul writes to the Colossian church because they had problems.**

“**Put to death**, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. **But now you must rid yourselves of all such things** as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, **clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive** whatever grievances you may have against one another. **Forgive** as the Lord forgave you. And **over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity**” Colossians 3:5-14 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

#### **Sinful men understand the power of unity.**

“But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, **then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.** Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other” Genesis 11:5-7 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

#### **Only the Spirit of unity can take a city.**

“All the people rose as one man, saying, “None of us will go home. No, not one of us will return to his house. But now this is what we'll do to Gibeah: We'll go up against it as the lot directs. We'll take ten men out of every hundred from all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred from a thousand, and a thousand from ten thousand, to get provisions for the army. Then, when the army arrives at Gibeah in Benjamin, it can give them what they deserve for all this vileness done in Israel.” **So all the men of Israel got together and united as one man against the city**” Judges 20:8-11 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

“When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to his own work. From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. **But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me**” Nehemiah 4:15-18 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

“So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up — one on one side, one on the other — so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword” Exodus 17:10-13 (NIV).

### **Jonathan and his armor-bearer inspire more unity in others.**

“Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, ‘Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few.’ **‘Do all that you have in mind,’ his armor-bearer said. ‘Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul.’** Jonathan said, ‘Come, then; we will cross over toward the men and let them see us. If they say to us, ‘Wait there until we come to you,’ we will stay where we are and not go up to them. But if they say, ‘Come up to us,’ we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the LORD has given them into our hands.’ So both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost. ‘Look!’ said the Philistines. ‘The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in.’ The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, ‘Come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson.’ So Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, ‘Climb up after me; **the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel.**’ Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him. In that first attack Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre. **Then panic struck the whole army** — those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties — and the ground shook. **It was a panic sent by God.** Saul's lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the army melting away in all directions. Then Saul said to the men who were with him, ‘Muster the forces and see who has left us.’ When they did, it was Jonathan and his armor-bearer who were not there. Saul said to Ahijah, ‘Bring the ark of God.’ (At that time it was with the Israelites.) While Saul was talking to the priest, **the tumult in the Philistine camp increased more and more.** So Saul said to the priest, ‘Withdraw your hand.’ Then Saul and all his men assembled and went to the battle. **They found the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords.** Those Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines and had gone up with them to their camp went over to the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. When all the Israelites who had hidden in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the **Philistines were on the run, they joined the battle in hot pursuit.** So **the LORD rescued Israel that day,** and the battle moved on beyond Beth Aven” 1 Samuel 14:6-23 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. **For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them**" Matthew 18:18-20 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

### **What can the spirit of division look like at church?**

- **Gossiping – Undermining others or undermining leaders.**
- **Unforgiveness – Holding Grudges. I'm right, and you're wrong!**
- **Disrespect of others – directed at family, teachers, leaders or your peers.**
- **Disrespect of church property or other peoples' things**
- **Harshness toward others = lack of good manners either verbally or in action.**
  - **Physical or verbal abuse of others - even toward a sibling.**
- **Rebellious attitude – the inability to receive advice from leaders or others.**
  - **A know-it-all attitude. I'm mature, and you are not.**
- **Unaccepting of others because of differences.**
- **Unaccepting of newcomers – rejection of others. Christ did not reject you!**
- **Controlling attitudes – bullying physically, verbally or socially.**
  - **Cyber bullying on-line.**
- **Correcting others in an unloving manner – a subtle put-down.**
- **The spirit of division must be put to death.**
- **If you are guilty of any of this, repent, and ask God for forgiveness.**

### **Final Appeals for Unity**

"Finally, brothers, good-by. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, **be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you**" 2 Corinthians 13:11 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, **I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith** of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved — and that by God" Philippians 1:27-28 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

"**Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.** Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" 1 Peter 3:8-10 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united** in mind and thought" 1 Corinthians 1:10 (NIV) (Emphasis added).

**Which team are you on? Unity or Division?  
Do you want the blessing of God on your Life?  
Do you want to take our city for God? Will you be a watchman?  
Do you want some saved or all saved for God?  
Will you sound the trumpet against division?  
Unity is an act of worship.**

**Which team are you on?**