

Unity_They May Be One

I would like to take a moment to talk to you about the unity of the body of Christ.

I submit to you that unity in the body of Christ is important for a number of reasons.

What I am going to focus on today is, unity in the body of Christ among the saints as it relates to the words of Jesus, "that they may be one, as we are", (John 17:1). How is God and Jesus one. How are we the saints expected to be one. How are Adam and Eve one. To varying degrees all three are one in the same way.

According to Webster unity is "the quality or state of being made one", continuity without deviation or without change in purpose or action.

According to the Bible:

- Jesus and God are one in that Jesus is the image of an invisible God, the exact likeness or a perfect copy (Colossians 1:15).
- Jesus and God are one in that for in Jesus dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
 - Godhead is defined as God's Deity, personality, and this one I really like, the state of being God, Godhead is defined as the attributes of God, His "Divine" nature and properties (these definitions come from Strong's and Vines concordances).

Do you know that the word Godhead appears in the Bible three times. Each time it appears it has a different Greek word associated with it. The previous definition is the definition of the Greek word that appears in Colossians 2:9. In Jesus dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. In Romans 1:20, Godhead speaks about God as revealed by nature. But this speaks of God as revealed by his son. For the Bible says that no one knows the Father nor Jesus except the son, and he whom the son reveals him to. I could go on with this for a long time here but I need to just move on. For, the spirit of the profit is subject to the profit.

- Oneness also refers to God's power in "All power is given unto Jesus in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18).

- Oneness also refers to God's glory in "That all men should honour Jesus, even as they honour the Father" (John 5:23).

- Oneness is also referred to in "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Jesus's statement that all power is given unto me, is in perfect agreement with the Athanasian Creed which says:

So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not Three Almighties but One Almighty.

The Bible's statement that in Jesus dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and the Strong's Concordance definition of Godhead as being the state of being God is in perfect agreement with the Athanasian Creed which says: The deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory and coeternal in majesty.

The Bible's statement to honor the Son as you honor the Father and its statement that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" is also in perfect agreement with the Nicene Creed which says: "He is to come with the same body and with the glory of the Father"

These examples of the oneness of God and Jesus represent the upper extremes of oneness, perfect harmony, continuity without deviation, without change in purpose, without change in action, the exact likeness, a perfect copy, same in personality and Deity, equal in power and glory, and as said before, this one I really like, the state of being God.

The concept of oneness implies that God and Jesus are one despite their differences or separateness, whatever they might be. This may be a little hard to see. Nevertheless, John 1:1 says "In the beginning was the word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. "With God implies separateness" and "was God" implies oneness. This is in perfect agreement with the Athanasian Creed which says: For each person -- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit -- is distinct, but the deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, equal in glory and coeternal in majesty.

You might ask, Herman, why are you talking about creeds and the bible, instead of talking about the bible only, after all the bible is the final authority. Well creeds were developed because, we all use terms like, one God in three persons, but frequently we do not all mean the same thing. Thus we have creeds, which records what people mean when they use language. Creeds do not define what we mean, rather it records what we mean. Creeds serve a similar purpose as a dictionary. It records how people use language. They promote unity in thought.

John 1:1 says In the beginning was the word. The word was with God, and the word was God. With God speaks to separateness, and was God, speaks to sameness. Because the critic does not understand the Athanasian Creed's concept of "One God In Three Persons", they take what they think the creed was trying to say, and hand it back to us. Often times we accept their definition of terms like one God in three persons, and try to defend the argument that they gave us. The critic essentially refutes his own argument. This is called a straw-mans argument.

In order to understand what the writers of the creed and the writers of the bible meant we must first look at an unpopular relationship definition of person. Then we apply that relationship definition of person to the definition of God. What we end up with is God is the relationship of three persons with many attributes in common. That many, amounts to all attributes that have any significance. If you happen to find an attribute somewhere that they do not share, that attribute does not amount to a hill of beans. ... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father (John 14:9).

The understanding of the concept of "one God in three persons" is based on the definition of person, but as stated in Acts 2¹⁵, not as ye suppose. Let us look at oneness, sameness, or one God in three persons according to a different definition of person. This different approach acts as a transitional concept between the upper extremes of the oneness of Jesus and God and the oneness or sameness among the saints. A person is often defined as separate entities or based on their differences. Yet, there is a less popular, but equally valid definition of person. A person like God is often defined not based on their differences, but is defined based on their relationships or things that they have in common. This relationship definition is found in the concept of the first person and the second person, the plaintiff and the defendant. The plaintiff consists of several individuals without change in purpose or action, all defined as one person. For example the board of executives. It is this concept of person that is used by the Athanasian Creed. One God consisting of three individuals or three persons.

The point being, the phrase "that they might be one as we are one" uses this concept of oneness. This oneness is defined based on what we have in common, despite our differences. The idea is that, what we have in common is so significant that our differences really do not matter. If you have seen me, you have seen the father. This is how we the saints are expected to be one, that what we have in common is so significant that our differences really do not matter.

This concept of oneness is further expressed in sameness. How can two things that are different be the same or equal. Generally speaking, they are not absolutely equal. Their sameness is based on what they have in common, despite their differences. For example synonyms or two words that are pronounced differently but mean the same thing.

The same concept is imbedded in equality. No two things are exactly equal. Nevertheless a perfect copy is about as close as you will get. The Declaration of Independence states that all men are created equal in that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. Among these rights are, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Their equality in these, three, areas is what defines them as being equal, despite the fact that the number of their differences are greater in quantity than the number of things that they have in common. Nevertheless the weight given to the three things that they have in common, outweigh the huge number of their differences. God and Jesus are equal in a lot more areas than this as we have seen. Jesus is at the very least a perfect copy.

It is the concept of one person consisting of several individuals that the Athanasian Creed uses to define one God consisting of several individuals or one God in three persons. This is a perfectly valid definition of person and a perfectly valid definition of God, equal in power and glory and various other non-physical attributes. Their common attributes far outweigh the common attributes of the board of executives, of a corporation. We have to move past rebellion before we can get to faith.

What things do we the saints have in common, so that our differences really do not matter. I submit to you that there are about eight principles that must be considered, when establishing sound doctrine, maybe a few more, but definitely not less nor significantly more. They are:

1. We know and acknowledge that the Word is inspired by the Holy Spirit.
2. The Word is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness.
3. The Word does not contradict itself.
4. any doctrine of men that conflicts with even one relevant passage in the Holy Bible, must be revised to satisfy that relevant passage; or else, it must be discarded, for it is a half-truth doctrine.
5. the WORD is truth.
6. the scriptures must be taken as a whole.
7. the context in which a passage is found must be considered in interpreting scripture.
8. There is no difference between the Jew and the gentile, the moral and the immoral, because God considers all righteous only by the work that Jesus did on the cross. Jesus is our sacrifice and only by his blood are we considered righteous, and not our own blood nor our own good works.

I am not saying that these are all the principles, but they are certainly important. Furthermore, an extended list, such that it is extremely difficult, for people to agree on all the points, borders on works of the law rather than works of faith.

In summary it is this oneness or sameness concept that Jesus is addressing when he says "I pray that they might be one". It is this denominationalism that he is attacking. It is this focus on difference, rather than giving due consideration to what we have in common that is being attacked. Ask yourself, is there any other denomination other than your own, that you consider yourself one with? If so then why? If not then why?

I hope that these words tho quick, have been profitable for your understanding. For what saith the Word, "and they are written for our admonition". Grace and peace be unto you, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.