



UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

'Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace' says Ephesians 4:3.

The key words are *make every effort*. Hence we see that unity of the spirit is not something which comes naturally: it is something that we must work towards, making every effort.

When we were baptized, we were all baptized into one body. 1 Cor 12:13. Though we are different and many, we come together to make up this one body. We were individuals who by one Spirit were baptized into one body. We can therefore say that through baptism, we are united into this one body. However, since we are individually different members, we do not naturally and automatically function in perfect unity with one another. In our co-existence with each other, each of us must make a conscious effort towards unity of spirit.

Division in the body hampers the function of the body; it destroys the work of the church of God. As members of the body of Christ we must guard against this: because unknowingly, our actions may cause disunity that leads to division in the church.

Acts chapter 2 highlights two essentials that kept the church together. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings and to fellowship. Today, we must also make effort in these two areas.

The truth binds us together. Paul refers to Timothy and Titus as his true sons in common faith. It is because they share this common faith that Paul refers to them as 'my true son.' If they do not share the same truth then there is nothing that binds them together. Eph 2:19-20 tells us that we are members of God's household, built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles. If we lose this foundation of truth, our bond is also lost.

Amos 3:3: 'if we do not agree, we cannot walk together.' Similarly, without a common faith we cannot walk together. The truth was once and for all given to the church but the understanding of individuals continue to grow. Therefore at some stage, some may have a different understanding of the Word. When this occurs, Acts chapter 15 has a

precedent as to how we can handle this issue. The issue was brought to Jerusalem to be discussed by the apostles and elders. When a decision was made, it was accepted by all and the church rejoiced. This is the practice of the church. When we come across problems or issues that we do not understand or cannot settle, we should bring it before the church for discussion and deliberation. When a solution or decision is made, we should rejoice.

There must also be a unity in fellowship; the unity between brethren. No one exists alone. We need companions in our life. Eccl 4:9-12 tells us clearly that two are better than one... For if one falls, the other can lift him up... One who is alone has no one to help him up... It would be even better if there are three.

It is just not the will of God for any individual member to work alone. That is why He created every member for a different function; so that we cooperate and coordinate for the proper functioning of the whole body. The parts that seem weaker also play an important role in the functioning of the whole body. 1 Cor 12:23: 'members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor.' The reason is quite simple; they need our support. The strong to support the weak, the greater giving honor to the weaker: this is the reason we are put together into this one body. 1 Cor 12:25: 'that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.' This is how we should live together in the church.

The will of God is for the church to be united. When it was time for our Lord Jesus to depart, he was concerned for his disciples. That was why in John 17:11, he prayed that the heavenly Father keep them as one just as he and the heavenly Father are one. Only when we have this unity in fellowship can members support one another in their life of faith. Heb 10:25 tells us that as we see the day drawing near, we must not neglect assembling together to encourage one another. In these last days we need to always assemble together to encourage one another. Let us support one another in our life of faith so that none should fall but all come to His glory.