
BIBLE TALK

Our study this week is a continuation of what we studied last week. We are interested in a statement made by the apostle Paul. Listen carefully as I read:

Acts 26:24-29

24 Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"

25 But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason.

26 "For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.

27 "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

29 And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."

In other words, the apostle said he wished that everyone was just like he was – except for the chains that bound him.

Q: If the apostle got his wish, what would you expect to see? Would you expect different churches and different teachings? Would you expect to see different ways of being saved and different ways of worshipping God?

A: No! This is not what you would expect. If everyone was like Paul, you would expect that all churches everywhere would be teaching the same thing, worshipping in the same way, teaching only one way of salvation. You would not expect to see all the confusion and division in religion like you see today.

JESUS' PRAYER FOR UNITY

When Paul made his wish, he was only saying what Jesus had previously prayed for – do you realize this? Yes, Jesus wanted all of His disciples to be just alike. He did not want there to be any division. Listen to the Lord as He prays to His father:

John 17:20-23

20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;

21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

EXCLUSIVENESS BOTHERS PEOPLE

This idea of:

- One right church
- One book
- One plan of salvation

... this is very disturbing to many. But the Bible is truth:

John 17:17

17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Truth is very narrow. Truth does not give you several choices. And because of the narrowness of truth, we should not be surprised that the Bible teaches:

- One God (1 Cor 8:5-6)
- One Savior (Jn 14:6)
- One book (Rev 22:18-19)

Many will agree on these points. **But** ... the idea of one church is more than most people can tolerate! However, the Bible teaches one church just as surely as it teaches one God:

1 Corinthians 1:10

10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

This passage was written by Paul (he's the one who wished that everyone was just like he was). He wanted all the church members to be "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" He did not tell the church: "If you can't all agree on what to teach, or how to worship, or what should be done, then the ones who disagree should pull away and start their own group and they can go to heaven another way." There was no such talk as this.

- He gave no suggestion to start new churches.
- Instead, the apostle gave instructions on how to maintain unity (1 Cor 12).
- Furthermore, he taught that we are to withdraw from those causing division:

Romans 16:17-18

17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Apostle Paul wished everyone would be just like him.

For this to occur, we must reject all human philosophies and manmade religious ideas and accept only NT teachings:

Matthew 15:8-9

8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

My friend, if you are not a member of the church of Christ, you need to be. This is what the Bible is teaching and we are not saying this to be arrogant, or mean-spirited. This is simply information that you need to be aware of because it's what the Bible teaches.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our web site www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on *Bible Talk*.