
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Is religious division beneficial and divinely approved?**

The answer to this question is found in John 17 when Jesus prayed to His heavenly Father:

John 17:20-21

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.

Again:

John 10:16

16 "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

The Lord's prayer and desire was for "one fold and one Shepherd." He intended that there be only one church for all believers.

Religious division is wrong. Every time a new denomination begins, sin is committed. Every year that an old denomination continues, sin is committed.

Romans 16:17

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

Those who divide the Lord's people with doctrines and practices foreign to the scriptures are heretics and are to be avoided.

UNITY IN DOCTRINE

The Lord has spoken on religious division. He hates division and He commands unity. If we claim to be Christians, we must be united in what we teach.

Galatians 1:8-9

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

This passage does not allow denominations to exist - each teaching its own doctrine. Any doctrine not clearly taught in New Testament scriptures is clearly heretical.

1 Timothy 6:3-5

3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,

4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,

5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

According to this, everything taught must be what the Lord Jesus Himself taught. Human opinion and traditions are clearly wrong.

UNITY IN PRACTICE

The Lord has spoken on division. He hates division. If we claim to be Christians we must practice only those things which were practiced by Christians in Bible days.

Acts 2:42

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

This was the Lord's church. They continually practiced only what the Lord's apostles taught. They did not invent their own devices of worship.

1 Corinthians 14:37

37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

The commandments which the apostles gave the churches to keep were the Lord's commandments. Any church neglecting those commandments is sinning. Any church changing those commandments is sinning.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Many more scriptures could be given, but time will not allow. Thus far we have learned these points:

- Religious denominations are wrong and contrary to the Lord's will because they divide believers into sects and parties - each teaching its own peculiar doctrine and practicing its own invented form of worship.
- Only those things which the Lord and His apostles taught in the New Testament scriptures may be taught today.
- Only those things which the Lord and His apostles commanded in the New Testament scriptures may be practiced today.

Everyone has a personal responsibility to study the scriptures himself and to judge whether his church is practicing only what is clearly taught in the New Testament scriptures.

Every responsible adult, no matter how humble, is able to understand the scriptures and judge on religious matters.

John 8:32

32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Jesus spoke these words to common men. He expected common, ordinary men to be able to read and understand the scriptures for themselves. Also, He expected these same common people to be able to pass correct judgment over what they had read.

Matthew 7:15

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Again, this is spoken to ordinary people. Everyone is capable and responsible to judge whether their church is really the church of the New Testament scriptures.

As a personal challenge, I ask you to consider this question:

If Jesus and His apostles came to earth this Sunday and visited your church services, would they be surprised at the changes that have taken place, or would they think nothing has changed with the passing of time?

If there have been any changes from the original pattern, you need to get out of that church and look for one that teaches and practices like the ones in the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 6:17

17 Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."