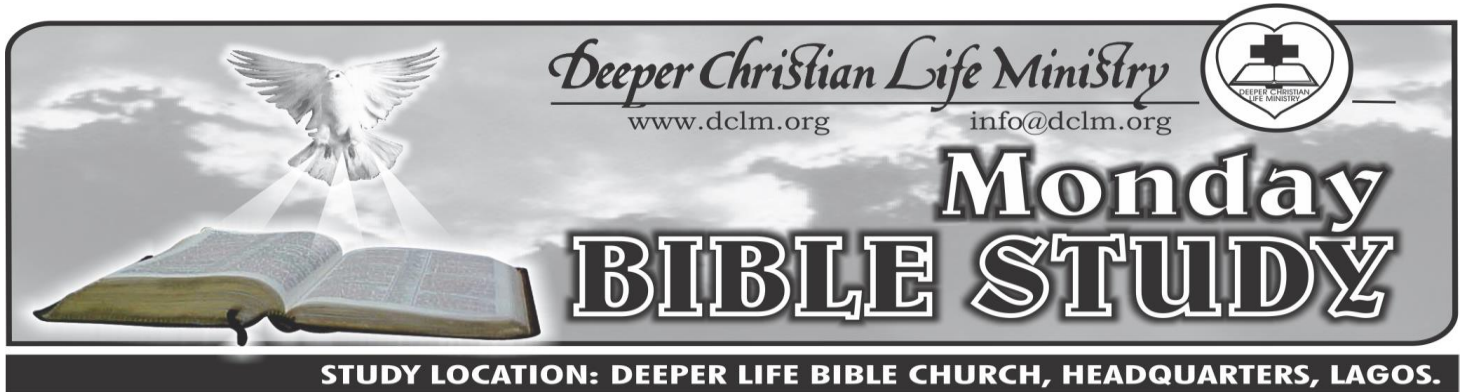




21/09/2020

THE PRIORITY OF SCRIPTURAL UNITY IN HIS CHURCH

1 Corinthians 1:10-25

Apostle Paul's writing to the church at Corinth is instructive to all the churches throughout the world. He emphasised the priority of scriptural, perpetual and profitable unity in Christ's Church. This must be at the forefront of all our decision and aspiration as members in His church.

1. THE PRICE OF COMMITMENT TO UNITY IN CHRIST

1 Corinthians 1:10

Unity in the church demands a price. For the love of Christ, the progress of the church and to fulfil our purpose of being in the church, we pay the price of commitment to unity in Christ. As members of the body of Christ, we must ensure that "**there be no divisions among [brethren]**".

(i). The Purposeful Unity of Messengers on the Scriptures

1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:3-6; Philippians 1:27; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Corinthians 13:8

Believers' unity is based on the Scriptures. We need to make effort "**to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**" for the progress of the gospel. Unfortunately, many 'Christians' go through life but do not make deliberate effort to pay any price to achieve unity. If the church cooperates and coordinates like one body with one Spirit dwelling in us, we will have the same hope of getting to heaven. The essence of our unity is for every believer in the church to become "**perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.**"

(ii). The Prevailing Unity among Members through Sanctification

1 Corinthians 1:10; John 17:17,21-23; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 2:11; Acts 2:1,46; Philippians 2:2-5

Unity prevails among sanctified members and ministers of the church. Believers with the same purpose, indwelt by Christ and the same Spirit, and controlled by the same Scripture cannot be divided. Christ wants us to be sanctified so that "[we] **all may be one**". He did not pray for our sanctification so we would overlook sin, evil or false doctrine; but to be united on Scripture and the Spirit. Just as God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are united, the Lord wants us to have real unity that pervades everything.

(iii). **The Perfect Unity of Mind for His Sake**

1 Corinthians 1:10; 2:16; Romans 12:2,16; 15:5,6; Philippians 2:5-8; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 3:15,16; 1 Peter 3:8-12

The Lord wants believers and His ministers to have the “**mind of Christ**”. The proof we are truly converted is that, wherever we are, we “**speak the same thing**” and are “**perfectly joined together...**” The joining brings perfection. It also helps us to perfect the saints in the church. Those who have the mind of Christ possess perfect unity which affects how they speak, act and live their lives. One who has the mind of Christ who “**...made himself of no reputation**”, will not give room to pride in his heart. He will not be after reputation, honour or recognition.

2. THE PREVENTION OF CONTENTION AND DISUNITY IN THE CHURCH

1 Corinthians 1:11-18

Paul had preached the gospel at Corinth and brought many of them into the kingdom of God. Others like Apollos and Peter also preached there. Now the people were taking sides with the preacher they preferred. This brought disunity and “**contentions among [them]**”, which “**the house of Chloe**” declared to the apostle.

(i). **Preventable Contentions and Disunity in the Church**

1 Corinthians 1:11-13; Proverbs 13:10; Titus 3:9; 1 Corinthians 3:3-9; 2 Corinthians 12:20,21

The division of the Corinthian church into camps was the reason for the contention among them and it was preventable. But because “**ONLY by pride cometh contention**”, these people were disunited. Pride, backsliding, debate and strife lead to contention. We can prevent contention and disunity in the church if we approach the word of God, personalise and internalise it. If our concern is to be holy and get to heaven, we will have no division, disunity, contention and disagreement amongst us.

(ii). **Prioritised Concentration on Discipleship in the Commission**

1 Corinthians 1:14-17a; Matthew 28:19,20; John 4:1-3,41,42; Acts 26:14-22; 14:21-23

“**For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel**”. Paul the apostle did not disprove the doctrine of water baptism, but made it clear that his focus was on preaching the gospel, whilst others baptize. He emphasised water baptism and discipleship. He followed in Jesus’ footsteps, brought people to the knowledge of salvation and allowed his companions who laboured with him to baptize the converts in water.

(iii). **Perpetual Consecration to the Doctrine of the Cross**

1 Corinthians 1:17,18; Philippians 3:17-19; Hebrews 12:2; Philippians 2:3-8

The priority and pattern of Apostle Paul’s life was to emphasise the doctrine of the cross, that is, the sacrifice Jesus made to bring us into and make us abide in the Kingdom.

3. THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS AND THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

“**For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God**”. The preaching of the cross makes us to experience the

power of God – the power that saves, recreates in us a new nature, sanctifies and brings us to the blessing and fullness of all the provision of Calvary. That was why Paul concentrated on the preaching of the cross.

(i). **The Preaching of Provisions in Christ's Cross**

1 Corinthians 1:18; Ephesians 2:16-22; Colossians 1:20-23; 2:13-15; Galatians 6:14-16

Both the Jews and the Gentiles are reconciled to God by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. He slew the enmity between the sinner and God at Calvary. Therefore, “**through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father**”. Christ has also taken away everything contrary to us because of our past transgression. He took our accusation, condemnation and judgment, “**nailing it to his cross**”.

(ii). **The Prediction of the Peril of Contradictory Contestants**

1 Corinthians 1:19-22; 3:19-21a; Isaiah 29:14-16; Jeremiah 8:9; 1 Corinthians 2:6-8

The ‘worldly wise people’ count the wisdom, provision of God and the preaching of the cross as foolishness. They contest the preaching of the cross and the salvation, which Christ has provided. Their wisdom does not allow them to submit to the wisdom of God and His salvation. They reject the word of God and proclaim themselves wiser than the Scripture and God’s plan of redemption. Therefore, the Lord “**will destroy**” them and “**bring to nothing [their] understanding**”.

(iii). **The Partakers of the Power of Christ Crucified**

1 Corinthians 1:18,23-25; 2:2,5,7-10; Romans 1:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9; 13:4

We become partakers of Christ’s salvation and redemption through His sacrifice on the cross. When a sinner believes on Him crucified, his sins are taken away and He becomes his Substitute and sin-Bearer. Without the cross, there will be no conversion. As beneficiaries of God’s mercy and grace, we should “**all speak the same thing... be perfectly joined together** (in the proclamation of the gospel and service) **in the same mind** (His message, ministry, motivation, motive, manifestation of the Spirit of God, goal and direction) **and in the same judgment** (decision, pursuit, activity, passion and destination)”.