

### Unity so that Dorking may Believe

Jesus prayed: May they be one so that the world may believe.  
(John 17:23)

Ephesians 4:1-7

In the early 1970's Jean Darnell shared a prophetic picture, which went something like this: the Lord showed her Beachy Head in East Sussex near Eastbourne. As she watched she could see hundreds and hundreds of men and women walking up the cliff from the town, as she focused in she saw that they had no faces, they just walked and walked getting ever closer to the edge: eventually they walked to the edge and fell over to their death. She pleaded with the Lord to let her go and save them and He allowed her to go down onto the Cliffside. She stopped a lady going to certain death and sat her down. She went to save another but the previous lady got up and walked again this time falling to her death. Frustrated she looked around. Then she saw small groups of people in circles. As she looked closer she saw they were making daisy chains. She went and told them to stop and help but they were so wrapped up in their daisy chains that they ignored her... The daisy chainers were the Church; the fallers were the thousands who every day go to a lost eternity without Christ. Jean Darnell commented: as long as we remain an irrelevant introverted sect the world will continue to ignore us and go headlong into a godless future. What we need, what the Lord desires is a church that will join hands on the edge of the cliff so that no one can ignore us or Christ anymore and no one can not hear and know about his love for them. Unity so that the world will believe.

Jesus prays, yearns, longs and has a passion for the unity of His people. If we know the heart of Jesus, if we spend time, even for a few minutes a day, at the heart of the Almighty, listening to Him, we cannot avoid the fact that the passion of the Lord's heart is the same as it was two thousand years ago: 'Father, I pray that they may be one.....' (John 17:21). Unity lies at the very heart and depth of God's being.

The unity we are talking about is not the unity of an Islamic God or a Buddhist God or any other monistic God. It is a unity which is uniquely Christian: Father, Son and Holy Spirit - at the heart of the universe, sharing together, enjoying one another together, never at variance, the Son doing the Father's will but knowing that if He asks for twelve legions of angels the Father will change His will because they work together in their intimate unity. This is the kind of Unity we are taking about when we speak of the Unity of God's people.

When we talk about building unity or working for unity it's almost an insult. We cannot create unity, we cannot invent it, we cannot add to it. It's something that God gives - and when He gives it to us and we gladly and willingly receive it, the world sees something that it has never seen before. It sees Protestant and Catholic, High Church and Low Church, Poor and Rich, ex-right and left wing fundamentalists becoming one because they have given their lives to Jesus. Unity is a gift that God gives us.

It is not a surprising therefore, that our unity is going to be one of the most important areas of defence for us and one of the most important strategic places for attack from the Enemy. The Enemy is bound to attack your relationship with the persons you closest to, the people you are working alongside. He would be a fool not to. We have got to discover how to live not in the naturalness of our own unities, within our churches and congregations and across the boundaries of denominations and groupings but in the gift that God gives us of love for one another, for the household of God, as well as for the whole human race.

We don't work for unity, it is a gift. This doesn't mean to say we shouldn't seek the Lord to find out how that oneness is expressed in us. Of course we must do! Personally speaking I don't worry about the 22,000 denominations in the world of Christianity! They give us first of all an opportunity to understand the God who is a unity but a diversity, who has a variety within Himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and yet in Himself is a unity. You see, any

sort of unity we could achieve for ourselves would be rather bland and insipid, if it is without variation. That's not the sort of unity that the church is meant to have. There are bound to be differences and varieties. The unity that we are talking about is a relationship with three integers  $1 \times 1 \times 1$  equals 1. It's a relationship of multiplication not of addition. And the one God, whom we worship, is the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all equal but taking different functions within the one God. It is the God who is a Uni-God but is a Tri-Unity or Trinity. This is the God who can make a Universe full of the variety that we have got within it. We want this variety because Jesus said Methodists can love Methodists, URC's can love URC's and Anglicans can love Anglicans because Tax collectors can love Tax collectors without any grace at all (Luke 6:32-34, Matthew 5:42). It's when you meet somebody different from yourself that you demonstrate whether you have got grace or not. It when you love across the barriers of sameness into differentness. That's the demonstration of the grace of God and that is why it's a grace that God has to give us to love one another. And you can't love people without meeting them, can you? You do have to spend some time with people and get to know them if you are going to love them. We need to obey the Lord and to love one another across these boundaries. Outdo one another in love. I don't owe anyone anything but to love them. Jesus is longing to see masses of different people in different movements in different expressions of Christianity so loving one another that they join hands and refuse to budge until they see at least the Good News carried into all the world then the end will come. (A bit like that picture) This unity is not unanimity, that is an agreement with every single jot and tittle of our minds. No human being will ever be completely and utterly in agreement with any body else because we are in the great variety God Has made. It would not be healthy for us to be a clone exactly thinking the same as every single other person. This is not spiritual life, that is death. We can actually disagree and argue with people, and it sharpens our

minds like steel upon steel. It is by disagreement and further understanding that we break through into new insights. We will not always agree.

Neither is it uniformity, that is a similar pattern that is institutionally imposed upon us all. Of course we all (except the Salvation Army) break bread but isn't it interesting that we are never told in the Bible how to take Communion - it just says, do it. Was the cup passed round first or second, did it go round twice? Or four times like at the Jewish Passover Feast? We are not quite sure! When He said: "Do this in remembrance of me", He just said, 'Do it'. And we all do it in different ways. Then there is Baptism. You may be interested to know that in some parts of the Christian World they baptise three times, that is three duckings. They'd say "Father" once, 'Son' once, and if you are still alive 'Holy Spirit'. Some used to kneel and push the candidates forward. The Bible just says baptise, so we all baptise and we all break bread but even the way we do these commanded things differs.

Consequently it isn't uniformity. However we try to make it easy for God's things to be understood in every culture and language so that people can fit in and relate to one another.

Neither is this unity a Union, like a trade union, where it's members do not agree with everything but for the sake of lobbying and benefit of it's workers a common agenda is arrived at by gaining more than a 50% vote for the achievement of a majority end. (Sounds like Church Meetings!)

Neither is it a Unification, which is compelled, where people are forced to act and speak in a certain way.

It is a relationship or Family Unity - your Father is my Father. If we have a common Father, we have the same life - His. Are we going to fall out? Now that Father is defined in the terms of His providence and care for us, for apart from anything else He has given us His Spirit. Father goes on giving the Spirit to those who continue to ask for it. And so if we all have the gift of the Spirit from the Father and all equally have a claim as children upon that Father, that is the oneness we begin with (Luke 11:13). Father

gives to His children what is best for each - why should we be so envious and fight? We can always share. Did Jesus pray to the Church: 'Dear church, Please help me. Please please be one, Please get to be one with another?' Did He pray like that? Of Course He didn't - that is blasphemous: He prayed to the Father. Prayer is to the Father, not to each other. And He didn't have to wait two thousand years for His prayer to be answered. We may be waiting two thousand years until at least the Church has cottoned on to this wonderful gift but the gift was proved two thousand years ago. It was proved within hours of Jesus praying that prayer. Father answered the prayer of His own Son in the only way it could be done, for Jesus went out to the cross and, as He died all the things that divide men and women were crucified with Him. The old Humanity was strung up and God said it was condemned, it was executed, and as Christ died, the old Humanity, the Old Adam was put to death and buried and when He rose again He Rose one New Man. As one Man Adam began the whole human race, this one New Man began a whole new race of men and women who were born of God, belonged to His Family and shared in His common life, a life that has been through the Cross. That life has been put inside each of us so that all of us have the resources at this moment now to be exactly at one with every single other believer - husband and wife, parents and children, single and married, blacks and whites, Africans and Asians, High Church and Low Church etc. We have the ability because of the gift God has given us in Christ, because of what Jesus did two thousand years ago. And if you will not come to that life with the Cross written right the way through it like a stick of rock and insist on umbrage, or taking offence and not being forgiving, if you insist in standing on that ground, then you live in the old Humanity that God has said cannot please Him, for the flesh cannot please God. But if we live at the place of the Cross where the Spirit of God flows you will live in the oneness of that Spirit: the life that exists between the Father and the Son. "I pray that they may be one even as we are one": the Way of the Cross brings you to a

place where you know that you are one with every single other believer in the whole of the universe - and then Dorking will believe.

Just as Jesus died to make this Unity a gift to be received for the whole Church, so we need to understand and embrace the cost of unity. For Unity is on the agenda, perhaps more than ever before since those glorious first few centuries of the Church. It gladdens my heart to hear it spoken of and acted upon. My own calling into full-time ministry in 1978 was born out of a painful realisation that such events as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were at best a second rate pantomime and at worst a nasty stench in the nostrils of Father God, for all the on the surface froth there was little or no ongoing relationship among believers and certainly scant regard for each other from pride-filled congregations.

We have come a long way since them, and thank God for the person and work of the Holy Spirit who has dragged us, particularly leaders, to this point spiritually kicking and screaming! However I discern a great danger, a subtle temptation, in these days, which I must share with you. Put simply we want the icing but we are not prepared to bake the cake; we desire the precious oil of anointing as the Holy Spirit is pouring out in times of worship, ministry, and service, but we pay scant attention to living together in unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ 24/7. You see we desire Dorking and its surrounding Communities to believe, and wonder why it isn't happening - yet we pay lip service to 'being one' opting for Unity only when it serves our purposes. Don't ever forget that the prayer is conditional and we cannot do anything to make the second part happen!!!!

Pastor David

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