

# Apostolic Iron

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## CAN GOD BLESS A DIVIDED BODY?

What holiness is and what it is not is a significant topic of discussion among many of our brethren today. It is virtually impossible for any group of brethren to gather in any setting without the subject of holiness being brought up. This is a positive thing because it is healthy and productive to share differing views on any potentially controversial topic, as long as we keep the focus upon the subject and not on the speaker. Any "society" which stifles debate through fear, accusation, intimidation, and personal attacks upon the speaker is doomed to implode upon itself. Any association of people that discourages or even disallows discussion between differing viewpoints is cult-like. We are not wrong because we disagree with one another, but we are wrong when we take "private (Greek *idios* — "one's own") interpretations" and hold them up before all for the purpose of making everyone else's viewpoints automatically invalid.

We ARE a holiness people. The Scripture requires that it be so. Our standards of separation are one of the significant external evidences that saving faith is in our hearts. Equally as important, holiness is also an essential element of the expression of our relationship with the Lord. Yet, can holiness function in an isolated sense without any other contributing marks of faith being present in our lives? Can holiness alone qualify us as fit "to see the Lord?" Additionally, do I have a right to expect the body to accept the specific holiness "standards" of my particular "clique" as being the only litmus test for fellowship? More importantly, can I or the constituents of my "clique" divide the body of Christ by contending that everyone should follow my personal convictions (which in many cases are nowhere to be found in the Manual or the Bible)? Am I pleasing to God and true to His Word when I preach my brothers and sisters into hell because they disagree with me? Is not the entirety of God's Word still the judge of right and wrong? Regardless of how we answer these questions, it seems to be the exact position of BOTH extremes in our movement! God forbid that I judge anyone as worthy of hell, lest I be judged because I have wrongly judged others for disagreeing with my position.

### PEACE AND HOLINESS

Recently Hebrews 12:14 has invaded my waking thoughts and my night time musings. Whether "seeing the Lord" is a reference to heaven or to the manifestation of Himself to the world, I WANT TO SEE THE LORD! I personally believe that this Scripture is actually referring to both possibilities equally. Paul said:

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:" (King James Version)

“Persistently strive for peace with all men, and for that growth in holiness apart from which no one will see the Lord.” (Weymouth’s New Testament Translation)  
 “Strive to live in peace with everybody and pursue that consecration and holiness without which no one will [ever] see the Lord. (The Amplified Version)

In reference to this verse, the *United Bible Society’s Translator’s Handbook* states that it is impossible to be sure (from the Greek text) whether both “peace and holiness” or “holiness” alone is meant as being necessary to see the Lord. However, other parallel verses in the Bible leave no doubt as to the Lord’s meaning and intent. Matthew 5:8 reads, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” 2 Corinthians 7:1 states, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh [the external] and spirit [the internal], perfecting [not an event, but a process] holiness in the fear of God.”

Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, uses the same word for “follow” as he does when he tells Timothy to “follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (II Timothy 2:22). All of these verses, coupled with Hebrews 12:14, leave no room for doubt that seeing God is for the pure in heart. To be truly holy, I must cleanse myself of all filthiness of the flesh AND spirit. This is being truly “pure in heart” — this is true holiness. Can I have a pure heart / right spirit if I am not at peace with my brother? Is it possible to be holy and be “at war” with those who are in the same spiritual family as I am?

**“Can I  
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### **WE ARE TO PURSUE PEACE WITH OUR BROTHERS.**

According to Hebrews 12:14, I know that I must follow holiness in order to see Him, but “follow peace with all” has been the part of that verse that will not let me alone. Paul begins Hebrews 12 talking about the “great cloud of witnesses” and the importance of us avoiding easily besetting sins and “weights” as we run our race with patience (Greek — “endurance”). He reminds us of the contradiction of sinners that Christ endured and tells us that we are illegitimate if we do not receive His loving correction. Later Paul tells us to look “diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” He reminds us of the bitter Esau who caused division between himself and his brother and could not find a place of repentance. Then later he tells us that we are not come to Sinai, but “unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

He concludes with the admonition, “...let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.”

Yet, in the middle of all this Paul commands us to “follow [Thayer’s - “pursue, without the idea of hostility”] peace [Thayer’s - “peace between individuals, i.e. harmony, concord”] with all [note: the word “men” is not in the original Greek text].” Now, does any of this sound like it welcomes a spirit of division and contention over personal interpretations of one aspect of our salvation? Do we really think that we can wear a white robe and mingle with the angels, looking like they do on the outside but looking at each other with contempt on the inside? What does the Lord, who knows our thoughts and intents, think of us? We stand before Him who is a consuming fire, while He wonders where the reverence and the fear of Him is. He also looks for, but cannot find the spirit of brotherhood among those that He was beaten for and was crucified to save. If those of us who are polarized in our contentions for personal convictions on holiness would recognize, in our next meeting, that we are operating in the setting described above, would we then make the same accusations against our brothers which we so freely and irresponsibly make in many of our meetings today?

Do I have grace if I do not grant grace? To hear some preach today it sounds like God should be proud to have them, because they have “saved” themselves by those things which they are for and

against. Maybe I should envy those who so perfectly live for God that they do not need His mercy, His love, His grace, and His forgiveness LIKE I DO EVERYDAY. The grace that is so freely given to me causes me to remember daily that I have received “undeserved / unmerited” Divine favor. The Scripture states that “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). It seems that to many among us this verse offers an option — do we want to follow grace OR truth? However, Jesus is both grace AND truth. One without the other is invalid and unable to save. If I do not show grace to others, is that not evidence that I am not a partaker of grace? Are we truly convinced that we cannot be saved without the empowerment of God’s grace? If so, how can I not freely give what I have so freely received?

2 Corinthians 7:1 makes it very clear that the holiness for which we are all supposed to be striving is incomplete if only the outer man is addressed. The spirit and heart of a man MUST be holy also. I greatly fear for those whose total emphasis seems to be upon the external. The fixation of this position allows all manner of things to exist internally while hidden under the cloak of external separation. Can this be the reason so many men have completely shocked us by seemingly going almost overnight from one extreme to the other in their convictions? The external is easy to focus on because it is observable and measurable. But, the greatest danger to each of us is what we allow to abide in us internally.

### HOW DOES GOD FEEL ABOUT THOSE WHO DIVIDE HIS BODY?

The Bible says that it is an abomination for men and women to wear clothing which does not pertain to their specific gender (Deuteronomy 22:5).

“The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination [Hebrew *tow`ebah* — “a disgusting thing to be loathed, abhorred, and detested”] unto the LORD thy God.”

I believe this verse to be literally true! I teach this verse strongly! The word “abomination” escalates the significance of this verse and the principle it proclaims to enormous proportions. Webster’s defines “abominable” as, “that which is execrably or degradingly offensive or loathsome.” “Execrate” is defined as, “to detest utterly, abhor, abominate;” it also means, “to curse, imprecate evil upon, damn, denounce.” “Abominable” is the synonym which denotes that something is the most offensive it can possibly be.

But, do we not seem to consider the word “abomination” less serious when the Bible states that he who sows discord [Hebrew *mdan* — “strife, contention”] among brethren is an abomination to God (Proverbs 6:16-19)? Sowing discord in the body is an activity which God declares that HE HATES! Can God hate something that is not sin? No! His hatred for sowing discord is synonymous with calling it sin. Can I preach a woman into hell for wearing pants and not do the same thing for someone who is dividing the body? If I am not consistent in the practice and preaching of both equally, then I am guilty of “selective” faith — choosing what I like and ignoring what I do not. If I edit the Word by leaving out or ignoring the parts which do not help my cause and advance my political agenda, then I am significantly jeopardizing my salvation and the calling and election of those who follow and trust me.

The sanctity of the pastor / saint relationship should be beyond question with all of us. It certainly is when someone is “messing” with our sheep. So, how is it possible that a respected man among us could stand in front of a conference and tell people that if their pastor “has a TV,” they should go home and change churches? Is not sowing discord and violating the pastor / saint relationship at least as odious as having a TV? We can personally interpret the principles and precepts of God and use them to preach against books, radio, internet, coffee, sports, overeating, facial hair, and women's role in the church, as well as TV. However, the Scripture needs no interpretive expansion to be any plainer concerning how God feels about sowing discord! Can what I set before my eyes be more damaging to my salvation than what I harbor in my heart against my brother? **God have mercy on us! Are we even reading the same Bible?**

**“...the greatest danger to each of us is what we allow to abide in us internally.”**

## PEACE MAKERS, NOT PEACE BREAKERS, ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

The Lord strongly proclaimed “blessed are the peace **makers**.” Biblically, peace with my brothers is a synonym of unity. PEACE / UNITY DOES NOT JUST HAPPEN BY ITSELF; IT MUST BE MADE! The root Greek word for the English word “peace” in the Bible is “to join.” There can be no peace without a joining: no joining, no peace. Peace makers are called the “children of God” (Matthew 5:9); therefore, peace destroyers cannot be. Destroying peace is separating and dividing. The Bible calls this the work of the devil at its worst, and the work of the carnal at the very least (1 Peter 3:8-18).

For a long time I have overlooked the first part of Hebrews 12:14 (conveniently at times), but the Lord is refusing to allow me to continue to do so now. I long to “see” the Lord in greater manifestation (on earth) more now than at any time in my life. However, if the unity of the brethren is a necessary condition for me being able to see Him in manifestation, then seeing Him seems to be close to impossible at this time.

Again, Matthew 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” Hebrews 12:14 declares, “Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” Hebrews 12:14 and Matthew 5:8 are parallel verses which detail the requirements for us to be able to see the Lord. In mathematical logic, if  $a=c$  and  $b=c$ , then  $a=b$ . Because of this fact, we can confidently conclude that being “pure in heart” is speaking the exact same thing as “being at peace with all men and being holy” (set apart from the world and set apart unto God). Does anyone really want to be in the position of arguing against both peace with all men and holiness being required in order to be able to “see the Lord”? What would be the purpose of such an argument, other than to excuse participation in or ignore responsibility for dividing the body and still be able to claim to be saved?

**“Were those preachers who preached or advertised on TV from 1955 to 1977 lost?”**

I feel strongly about brethren being able to have the right to follow their convictions to preach the gospel on TV. NEVERTHELESS, I WOULD GLADLY VOTE AGAINST DOING SO if there was any legitimate possibility of that resolving our division and making us one, once and for all. However, I am convinced that the problem and the division will not go away regardless of the outcome of this or any business meeting. Why? Because the real problem is not one of issues as much as it is one of attitudes, regardless of which “side” we are on!

One e-mail response which I received to the first article said that it is those who are trying to change the Manual who are the source of division. But, is this really the case? The prohibition against preachers having a TV in their home was voted into the Manual in 1955 or 56. The resolution forbidding the preaching on or advertising on TV was not passed until 1977 — **20 PLUS YEARS LATER**. If those who want to RESTORE this right to preachers, which was allowed for over 20 years, are the reason we have division today; what does that say about those who pushed for and caused the resolution to be passed in 1977? If those who want to change the Manual back to the former privilege are dividing the body, so were those who pushed for it to be changed in the first place. We cannot have it both ways, brethren! Were those preachers who preached or advertised on TV from 1955 to 1977 lost? By the standards of some today, they were. I was in the business meeting when preaching on TV was banned; but, I do not remember even one time anyone arguing for the resolution by stating that those who were preaching on TV were committing sin. Why then would they be considered sinners today?

The word “Satan” means “adversary, one who opposes” (Thayer’s). Webster’s defines “adversary” as, “a person who opposes or fights against another; opponent; enemy.” When I make my brother my adversary, I am participating in the spirit and the work of the one who opposes. When my brother responds to my treatment of him as an adversary in an adversarial manner, then I have helped him to also become an ally of the one who opposes. How can God bless this mess? Neither side can blame the other for the division because both sides have disqualified themselves by participating.



Blaming others for the way I act or the attitude that I have, taking no personal responsibility for either, is one of the least Christ-like things that I can do. No one can “make” me respond the way I do; it is my decision. I and I alone am responsible to God for my actions and attitudes. There are sins which are actions (of the flesh); there are sins which are attitudes (of the spirit). We MUST cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of both the flesh and spirit. I cannot be saved unless I repent. I cannot repent unless I acknowledge that I am wrong. And, I will never acknowledge my wrong while I am blaming my failures on somebody else.

## **FOLLOWING PEACE WITH ALL MEN IS THE WILL OF GOD AND THE PATHWAY TO BLESSING.**

There is no history of controversy in any of our relationships (individually or collectively) which is worth holding onto at the cost of not “seeing the Lord.” It would be a tragedy of immense proportions to allow our past history and / or our present conflict with each other to prevent our future blessings. Can we not give up the past problems with our brothers individually and with the organization in general in order to have a future of blessings? Paul presents “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” as the ideal mind set, a “rule of thumb” whereby we can walk in and mind the same things (Philippians 3:13-16). Once we have dealt with the past which stands between us, we can then focus on the present!

In the year 2000 I did an extensive study on the subject of “Unity;” and, as a result of this study, I can SAY WITH ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE THAT GOD HAS NEVER BLESSED A DIVIDED BODY — AND NEVER WILL! Neither salvation nor the blessings of God in Biblical proportions are truly available to any of us outside of true fellowship with the unified body of Christ. Psalm 133 tells us that the anointing of the body (the power and authority to minister), the fruitfulness of the body (the dew which produces the fruit of the earth), and the blessing upon the body are all directly connected by the Lord to the unity of the brethren. GOD’S WORD SAYS THAT THERE, IN THE PLACE OF UNITY, THE LORD COMMANDED THE BLESSING.

***“There are some who think the Church is made up only of those who are like-minded with them.”***

## **THE CHURCH IS THE “ARK” OF SALVATION.**

There are some who think the Church is made up only of those who are like-minded with them. But, let us not forget chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation. Inconsistencies in several of the Churches drew words of rebuke from the Lord, yet He still called each one of the seven, “The Church.” Why? Because regardless of their condition, He did not negate, ignore, or revoke the fact that they had been saved by the common salvation of Acts 2. Were some of them in danger of losing their salvation? Yes! But, they were still considered the Church because of the commonality of their origin.

Salvation is predestined to the corporate body of the Church, the body of Christ; not to any individual separate and apart from the body. The word “Christ” is the translation of the Greek word which means “anointed” (Strong’s). The church is the body of or the assembly of “the anointed.” Paul asked in 1 Corinthians 1:13, “Is Christ divided?” A divided “anointing” is no anointing at all. In Psalms 133, the anointing flowed down over a unified body. Being in the same organization, the same district, or the same local assembly is not synonymous with being in unity with the body. The promises of revival are made to the church body collectively. Noah’s ark was an instrument of salvation, and those who chose to be a part of that ship’s crew were saved; those who chose to “go it alone” perished. The same is true today. Salvation does not belong to individuals; it is promised to the church. For an individual to be saved, he must commit to being IN the body. The church is the body of Christ, and being in the body implies ACTIVE fellowship with all believers who are also IN the body. This completely eliminates the Biblical acceptableness of cliques, parties, and factions.

During Jesus' last evening on earth with His disciples before His crucifixion, He commanded them to love one another. Afterwards, He prayed that they would be ONE. The Apostle John was very impacted by the focus of the message and prayer of that last evening. Consequently, the theme of his entire first epistle to the church was focused on it. John said that if we cannot love our brother whom we have seen, then we DO NOT love our God whom we have not seen. Unity is not optional for those who desire to please God, to be a part of His kingdom, and to see Him in manifestation in the earth. John repeatedly emphasized in First John that not loving each other is disobedience to the Lord's command, and that disobedience is sin and removes us from fellowship with God.

John specifically states that our salvation is dependant upon the condition of the health of our fellowship with one another. The Apostle said in 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Being cleansed from sin by blood offered by individuals as a personal sacrifice is Old Testament. In the New Testament, there are NO personal blood sacrifices for sin; there is ONLY ONE blood sacrifice. Atonement through that blood is only available through the body. THE BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT or NEW COVENANT, THE BLOOD OF ATONEMENT, IS IN HIS BODY! (See Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25.) There is no access to His blood outside of His body. Again, the blood is in the body!

***"If I am to walk in a forgiven condition, I must be in undivided fellowship with His body."***

If I am to walk in a forgiven condition, I must be in undivided fellowship with His body. If I allow a grudge to separate me from fellowship with ANY member of His body, I cut off myself from my only source of blood which cleanses me everyday. Jesus made it crystal clear in several Biblical contexts: if I forgive, I will be forgiven; if I do not forgive, I will not be forgiven! Forgiveness is only possible through the blood! Jesus' statement concerning the requirement for me to receive forgiveness of my sins can only be true if it is in reference to my access to the body's blood. I repeat: the Church is the body of Christ. His body has His blood. **If I do not have undivided fellowship with His body, I have cut off my access to His blood!**

Like every other Scriptural principle, the inward action of forgiveness is not a fact unless it is demonstrated by an outward change of attitude and conduct toward those whom we have said that we have forgiven. Without the evidence of this outward change, the inner condition cannot be proven to exist. Consequently, the existence of forgiveness cannot be relied upon as making us obedient to the Lord's Word and acceptable to Him without the outward evidence of a change in attitude and conduct to the brethren being manifested.

I do not believe that the UPCI is the body of Christ. I DO believe that IT IS PART of the body of Christ. Before I remove myself from fellowship with any part of His body, I must first be able to prove to myself (and God) that the body is dead and putrid, and that the ONLY way I will be saved is by self-amputation from fellowship with the body. Otherwise, as an amputated member (self-inflicted or otherwise), I sever myself from life and the blood. Please be careful in concluding that you can NO LONGER STAND IT enough to remain in the part of the body in which you find yourself. You may discover too late that the one who is lost is you!

### **THERE IS NO TRUE FELLOWSHIP WITHOUT UNITY.**

The early church "continued steadfastly" in the apostle's doctrine AND fellowship. The Greek word translated "fellowship" is *koinonia*. It means "joint-participation." *Koinonia* was first used in Greek marriage contracts to specify the agreement between two people to share jointly in participating in the necessities of life. This word is also translated in other verses as "communion." The definition of the English word "communion" is "the act or instance of sharing; intimate fellowship or rapport." Fellowship and communion are synonymous terms. One without the other is impossible. Communion is not a celebration of our unity with the Lord. IT IS THE CELEBRATION OF OUR UNITY **WITH ONE ANOTHER** THROUGH THE LORD! According to 1 Corinthians chapters 10, 11, and 12, our participation in communion is to cause us to remember that WE share in the Lord's flesh and blood

(partakers of and participants in His body) which makes us ONE IN HIM. The judgment pronounced in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 is not upon those who eat with sin in their lives (as we have preached for years), but upon those who do not discern (or understand the true nature of) the Lord's body. Many are weak and sickly among us (and many die - 1 Corinthians 11:30) not because we eat with sin in our hearts, **BUT BECAUSE WE EAT WITH DIVISION IN OUR HEARTS**. Could this be why we pray for so many and they do not receive their healing? Could it be that either the one praying or the one receiving the prayer (or both) have division in their hearts? I am not making an accusation or proclamation concerning all of those who are sick and do not get healed; I am just expressing a thought for your prayerful consideration.

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus began His final ministry session with His disciples in the upper room with, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). We have **NOT OBEYED** this commandment until we have loved one another by **HIS** definition of loving each other. Our definition is not acceptable and does not produce obedience to the command. He defined the love that would fulfill His commandment as loving each other "as I have loved you." He gave up His life for us. He gave up His rights for us. He put us first ahead of Himself. He covered and forgave our sins rather than exposing them for all to see and know. He suffered innocently for us (even when we were rejecting Him). When He was reviled, He did not rail against those who railed against Him. From the cross He forgave those who put Him there, even though they **NEVER** asked to be forgiven. This is **HIS** definition of loving one another — "as I have loved you"!

## THE BLESSINGS OF UNITY

Jesus concluded the last evening of ministry to His disciples with the prayer recorded in John 17. The focus of His prayer was that we would be ONE. In His prayer, the Lord noted seven different benefits to our being ONE, to our being in unity with our brothers:

**1) We will be kept while in the world through His name** [Thayer's Lexicon for "kept" states, "to attend to carefully, to take care of; to guard"] — John 17:11

**2) We will have joy in us when we are one** — John 17:13 (see also 1 John 1:1-5)

**3) The world will believe that Jesus came to redeem them from their sins**, when we are one with the Father and with each other — John 17:21,23

**4) When we become one, we will have the glory of God manifested in us** and through us — John 17:22

**5) God will be able to bring us to perfection when our love for each other makes us one.** [Thayer's Lexicon for "perfection" says, "to make perfect, to complete; to add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full; to bring to the end (goal) proposed"] — John 17:23

**6) We will be proven to be recipients of the Father's love by being one** — John 17:23

**7) When we are one, we will be confirmed as the subjects of Jesus' prayer;** and therefore, unity will prove that we are His children not just by spiritual birth, but by the continued working of His Spirit in our lives — John 17:9-10,20

Therefore, according to John 17:11, **UNITY HAS AS MUCH TO DO WITH KEEPING US WHILE WE ARE IN THE WORLD AS HOLINESS DOES** in protecting us from its evils. Those who use either their "holiness" or their "liberty" as the justification for dividing the body (or dividing themselves from the body) have no safety for their souls in excusing themselves for participating in working against what Jesus prayed would happen. **We cannot emphasize unity over holiness or holiness over unity, since both are equally required by the Lord.**

***"We cannot emphasize unity over holiness or holiness over unity, since both are equally required by the Lord."***

## UNITY IS NOT BASED ON UNIFORMITY.

In John 17, Jesus confessed that He and His Father are ONE. He prayed repeatedly for us to be like He and His Father — **ONE!** He, the Son of God, was human. His Father is God (deity). Humanity and deity one? How is this possible? Through God's grace! It is impossible for us, as brethren, to be more diverse than humanity and deity are; yet, Jesus prayed for and expected us to be one. Jesus stated in John 11:42 that God always heard Him when He prayed. For those who are truly walking with God, Jesus' prayer cannot go unanswered.

The diversity of humanity and deity in conjunction with the oneness of the Father and the Son proves that unity is not the same thing as uniformity. Though we have different personalities, different gifts and abilities, different concepts and methodologies, and in many cases different convictions; we share the same Lord and Savior and we participate in the same body. Anyone who states or implies that unity is impossible with this amount of diversity among us is proclaiming to all that they believe that Jesus prayed in vain for God to do something which He is unable to do — **MAKE US ONE!**

Peter said: "...Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy"(1 Peter 2:10). In our natural family, we are not permitted a choice in the matter of whom our brothers and sisters will be. Those born to our mother and father become our brothers and sisters. Likewise, in the family of God, the Lord alone decides who our spiritual siblings will be. Yet, He fully expects (even commands) us to love one another and bear with (Strong's - literally "put up with") one another in love (Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:13). No family (whether natural or spiritual) can be a family on any other basis. I have never seen a family where all the brothers and sisters thought, acted, and looked just alike. Yet, this does not mean that they are not a family. We are not an organization, a denomination, a district, etc.; we are a family.

**"...the Lord will NOT give us unity on one level only."**

Every pastor wants this for his local church; however, the Lord will NOT give us unity on one level only. Either we want unity on every level of fellowship, or we will NOT have it on ANY level. We cannot sow disunity in the body corporate and expect to reap unity locally! Can the members of an arm (from the shoulder down) claim to be in unity if they are in unity with the members of the arm only, while they refuse to fellowship with the rest of the body? Is this unity in God's eyes? Is this acceptable to Him? I do not think so. His definition of unity is in reference to His body as a whole.

Sometimes "family members" must agree to disagree. Unity is not as much a product of agreement on every point as it is submission to the body as a whole. In order to be submitted to the body, generally we must submit ourselves one to another first.

**1 Peter 5:5** Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

**Ephesians 4:2** [Living as becomes you] with complete lowliness of mind (humility) and meekness (unselfishness, gentleness, mildness), with patience, bearing with one another and making allowances because you love one another. (The Amplified Version)

**Ephesians 5:21** Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Jesus said: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). The Greek word *sumphoneo* which is translated "agree" means, "to be harmonious, i.e. (figuratively) to accord (Strong's); literally, "to sound together" (sun, "together," phone, "a sound"), i.e., "to be in accord,



(Strong's); literally, "to sound together" (sun, "together," phone, "a sound"), i.e., "to be in accord, primarily of musical instruments" (Vine's). Surely when the Holy Ghost chose this word in Matthew 18 the Lord was not ignorant in His foreknowledge that this very Greek word would become the English word "symphony." Yet, the translators rendered it as "agree." Does this not demonstrate to us the Lord's concept of the agreement necessary for unity in His body? That which makes a symphony out of a group of musicians playing very diverse instruments is two fold. First, they agree to play the same musical score. Second, they submit to the leadership of the conductor and HIS interpretation of the score. Without these two conditions being met, there would never be harmony and accord. There would be only confusion and discord! Most of the time our business gatherings actually do sound like the symphony — before the concert, when everyone is warming up independently.

In order to have unity, we must submit to and defer to those that WE have chosen to lead us, even if we would not do things the same way they do them if we were in charge. This is the essence and foundation of love, family, and unity. Has there ever been a family where everyone always agreed with the way the one in charge of the family ran things? No, but they are still family! Let us not strive; we are brethren!

As the title of the website says and God intends it to be so, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). Why would we have to "submit" one to another if we agree on everything? Could it be that God intended for us not to see everything the same, in order to see if we would be humble enough to submit to the brethren even when we would do differently if we were allowed to?

### WHAT ARE THE REAL SOURCES OF DIVISION AMONG US?

Most of the division among us is NOT over doctrine; rather, it is over personality and priority differences. It is over competition to see whose self-will shall be preeminent. Our disunity is over control, prestige, popularity, etc. None of this is as important as doctrine. Yet, we persist in fighting and quarreling among ourselves and in boycotting meetings and fellowship because we do not like how leaders are leading, how services are conducted, who is getting to preach, whose choir is singing, how long or short the meetings are, how little or too much demonstrative worship there is, etc., etc., etc. How is it possible that God is pleased with this? His Word says that He is not!

Most of the comments and excuses made to justify isolationism generally infer that "it's the other guy's fault." Brethren, we would never allow or tolerate our saints to treat each other or us and our ministries the way we treat each other and our district's and / or organization's leadership. We need to repent to God and each other; we need to forgive each other; we need to love each other. I want to see God; don't you?

I am 61 years old and have been in this organization all of my life. I have served this organization and the brotherhood on both the district and national levels in many different capacities. As one who has invested much into this portion of the body of Christ because I was placed into it by God, I am pleading with you that we pray for and participate in the healing of this fellowship. If I am not actively a part of the solution, then I am a part of the problem. If I am not attempting to help gather ministers together, then I am helping to scatter them.

Many who are supposed to be followers have attacked and criticized the leadership, and many leaders have acted and reacted defensively and counter-attacked. We have warred over saints transferring from one church to another. We have competed with and complained loud and long about each other. Neighboring churches will not fellowship with each other for fear of losing people to another church or of "contaminating" their people with either "worldliness" or "extremism." We draw lines and set boundaries (both real and imagined) to protect ourselves from each other, further emphasizing how divided we are. Someone is rejoicing in all of this, and it is not God!

Even worse than the spirit of disunity that exists in the United Pentecostal Church is that, at times, we seem to be consumed with a "political spirit." The King James Version word for "political

***“In order to have unity, we must submit to and defer to those that WE have chosen to lead us...”***

spirit” is “strife” (James 3:14-16). Thayer’s Lexicon says that the Greek word translated “strife” means, “electioneering or intriguing for office...a desire to put oneself forward...partisanship, fractiousness.” And, strife IS a salvation issue because it divides the Lord’s body. It is IMPOSSIBLE to justify this activity among us because it is putting the will of some before the good of the body, regardless of the consequences to the body. James 3 makes it clear that politicking is NEVER of God. Strife is the opposite of submission to authority and to each other; therefore, it is synonymous with rebellion.

The present condition that our organization is in does not glorify God. We must all accept the responsibility for our part in it and change! The goal of this article is to cause each of us to acknowledge that the idea of excusing and justifying being isolated from and avoiding fellowship with those with whom we have a conflict is absurd. Scripture does not support the idea that God will bless any of us who are committed to our own thing and are withdrawn from the body. It is a lie, Brethren! We may be doing our own thing, but once we withdraw from the fellowship of the brethren, it is no longer God’s thing. I know this for a fact because I have done it. Even though I have withdrawn in the past because of refusing to fellowship with politics and innuendo, neither you nor I have been given the choice or privilege to withdraw. When I withdraw from the body, I am withdrawing from Him. Many will resist this idea, but the question each of us must answer Biblically is, will the Lord fellowship with us separate and apart from His own body?

Some will say, “But the UPCI is not all of the body of Christ.” As I have already stated, I be-

lieve that to be true. However, it is the part of the body that the Lord grafted you and I into; it is the part of the family He chose for us to be born into. Can the hand leave the arm and join itself to the leg simply because it is “the same body”? Can I just change mothers because I am in conflict with my mother? **Joshua and Caleb had a choice to make: use their faith and go into the promised land by themselves now; or stay with the body until it was able to go in together. Like Joshua and Caleb, I choose to stay!**

**“The present condition that our organization is in does not glorify God.”**

The attrition from Israel in the wilderness was God’s doing, not man’s! People did not just leave the fellowship of the Israelites or even change tribes. God moved them OUT of the body Himself! How? They died! The Word of God says that if I do not receive a love for the truth, GOD HIMSELF will send me a strong delusion that I might believe a lie and be damned! (2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). The context of this Scripture is referring to those who seek power and demonstration more than truth. Some have left us because of this — and they will not be the last to leave! However, it is truth that saves, not the demonstration of power. Look at Jesus’ own ministry. How many thousands were the beneficiaries of His power? But, where were they at Pentecost? It is one thing to want power; it is quite another thing to want Jesus!

(For anyone who knows me, I should not have to remind you that I have stood for the ministry of the Holy Ghost and the demonstration of the power of God for all of my ministry. I have not changed — I still do! But truth alone saves and sets free! No matter how much power we see demonstrated, we are lost without the whole truth! The oneness of God, the necessity of receiving the Holy Ghost and being baptized in Jesus name to be born again, Holiness unto the Lord, and Unity with the body are still parts of the WHOLE TRUTH!)

Others who have left or will leave are not seeking for God’s power — **THEY ARE SEEKING FOR THEIR OWN POWER!** They want to set the direction and tell everyone what to believe, and what to do and not do. They want to decide what is right and wrong for the rest of us. They want to be in control. They do not trust our Holy Ghost. They do not trust us to read the Bible. They do not trust us to follow God. **THEY DO NOT TRUST US!**

The applications for all three levels of license in the UPCI ask a question similar to this, “Will you refrain from contending for your personal views to the disunity of the Church?” Is this question on each of the applications less important than the one asking if we have a TV in our home? Why would we be ready to form a vigilante committee to oust the man with a TV, while raising NO CRY OF PROTEST over those who vocally declare that unity is impossible to achieve until we all agree with them?

## **BEFORE I CAN EXPECT YOU TO CHANGE, I MUST FIRST STRIVE TO CHANGE.**

It is time to put the past under the blood. It is time for the ministry to forgive and FORGET like the examples to our churches that we are supposed to be. It is time to love one another and bear with one another. It is time to permit one another to be who we are individually, and yet permit that unique individual to be one with the rest of us. I do not have to make everyone to be just like me in order to love them. Hands in no way resemble eyes, but they are a part of the same body. Every member of the body brings something different to the body for the benefit of the body. It is time that we quit expecting everyone to be like us, think like us, and act like us. Again, the essence of love is to accept the other brother for whom he is without requiring him to change to be like me in order for me to accept and love him. Also, it is time for us to quit being “spiritual Athenians” (Acts 17:21), gathering only to tell or hear some new thing. Love covers a multitude of sins; it DOES NOT broadcast the faults and failures of others through some gossip grape vine. Whatever happened to “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you?”

I desire unity. I desire fellowship. I desire to be a part of a body that is truly a body. I DESIRE TO SEE THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN THE EARTH AS HE HAS PROMISED! Therefore, I will do what I am asking you to do:

Brethren, I wholeheartedly repent for any of the above that I have been personally involved in, in any way. I ask to be forgiven by anyone I have ever talked about, instead of talking to. I ask to be forgiven by anyone I have wronged in any way knowingly or unknowingly. I ask to be forgiven by anyone that I have let down or failed in any way. I ask to be forgiven for withdrawing myself from participating in fellowship in an attempt to avoid any or all of the above. By the grace of God, I will never again purposely miss another meeting of any kind with the motive of trying to avoid anyone. I love ALL of you! I have no party or faction or side that I support. I am for Jesus and unity. I am for revival and fellowship. And, I forgive anyone who has wronged me in any way, whether they are sorry or not or whether they ever ask for my forgiveness or not — I forgive willingly and I want to be forgiven.

In writing this article, I am representing NO ONE but myself. I am taking sides with no faction, party, or person. There is ABSOLUTELY no one of any faction which I do not desire to have fellowship with as a brother. Writing this article was my idea and I alone am responsible for the content and the consequences of it. I am pleading no one’s case, except His body’s. It is past time that we were Christians in deed instead of just in word. To some, I am sure that this article will come across as, at best, being just hopeless idealism. But, if believing that the Lord is able to bring unity to His body is overly idealistic, I plead guilty and refuse to become an unbeliever because of skepticism and cynicism.

If you have read this article to this point, I thank you. Please accept the strong language of this article for what it is intended to be: passion for unity in our organization and His body, completely void of any desire to be offensive. Please pray about the contents of this article. Take the action which the Holy Ghost prompts you to.

I am open to discuss any or all of the points of this article. Any response to this article (by whatever means written or electronic) — negative or positive — will be graciously received. Every response will be personally read by me. However, because of the hundreds of e-mails which I received due to the first article and which are likely with this one, and due to the amount of time I am trying to spend writing future articles, I may or may not be able to personally respond to your e-mail. Please forgive me in advance if that occurs.

If you are interested in a copy of any or all of my study notes on the subject of “Unity” or tapes of lessons taught on the subject of unity, you may click the button on the web page marked “products.”

The Lord bless each and everyone of you and your labors for Him. Please pray for me as I will pray for you. Let’s be a part of answering the Lord’s prayer request — “Father make them ONE.”

*“It is  
time to  
put the  
past  
under  
the  
blood.”*