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## Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

August 24, 2014

Hope for a Splintered Church

*“All the fullness of deity lives in Christ’s body.  
And you have been filled by Him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.”*  
Colossians 2:9, 10 (Common English Bible)

Every serious Christian today, aware of the struggle for building authentic disciples of Jesus in the present generation, must be troubled by the spectacle of a splintered church. Anyone well acquainted with the teaching of Jesus knows that the present divisions of the church are not His will. The prayer of our Lord in John’s Gospel is, “that they may all be one – so that the world may believe that you have sent Me.” The Apostle Paul advances the same in his first letter to the Corinthian Church, “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement that there be no divisions among you.” Divisions simply distract the church from its primary purpose of mobilizing people for the mission of Christ.

The theological divisions of the church are troubling. If we are concerned about this situation, as we ought to be, how is the church to proceed? The Apostle Paul suggests here, in these two sentences, that we seek our separated sisters and brothers not in the valleys of the doctrines that divide but on the mountaintop of a common confession that “All the fullness of deity lives in Christ’s body.” Affirming with renewed vigor this common confession can heal the theological divides that plague the church. It is living into the conviction that good Christians sometimes disagree but are held together in one confession that Jesus is Lord.

Naturally, this is accomplished when we silence the questioning of our sisters and brothers as to the sincerity of their faith. Such questioning only exacerbates the hurtful divisions. What is better is reclaiming our theological center that professes that the Church in every age needs continual reforming by the spirit of the living Christ. It is being deeply persuaded that there is still more truth to be revealed. From this juncture we may discover that our theological debates, which can often be fierce, can be transformed into a conversation where each of us strives to really hear one another, and hear another point of view.

Faith is not assenting to a set of propositions, or following a religious code. Faith is trusting Christ with our lives, as we would trust a friend with our most precious possession. Any hope for a splintered church will not be by abandoning our deepest convictions, nor an apathetic tolerance of another point of view. Rather our hope will be found in a firmer grasp that in Christ, and Christ alone, will our differences be reconciled. As we pursue a deeper intimacy with one another – in the midst of our differences – the church may well arrive at a deeper intimacy with God.

*Forgive my arrogance, O Lord. Too often I am convinced that I have grasped the truth and that others are wrong. Rather than building community with others, my differences of thought and belief deepen the divisions of the church. Help me realize again, as the early church professed, that there is still more to know, more to be revealed and more truth to be understood. In Christ may I seek spiritual communion with others. Amen.*

Doug Hood

*Reprinted from Dr. Hood’s August 15, 2014 blog posting.*