

THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM  
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Psalms 2 – “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

... Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

... Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son. Lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

Acts 4:18-31 (they) commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot speak the things which we have seen and heard. ... And being let go they went to their own company and reported all that the chief priest and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with *ONE ACCORD*, and said, Lord, thou art God, which *hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is*: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hath said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against His Christ. For of a truth against thy Holy Child Jesus, whom thou hast *anointed*, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And Now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with boldness they may speak thy word ... And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

John 17:11 “And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. Holy father, Keep through thine own name those thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are...”

:14 - I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

:15 - I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

:17 - Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

:18 - As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world.

:19 - And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may also may be sanctified through thy truth.

:20 - Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

:21 - That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

:22 - And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.

:23 - I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may KNOW that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

John 13:34-35 “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 ...”

God's love eliminates divisions and produces unity = *one accord*.

When in *one accord* a church, and the kingdom of Christ, has spiritual power to change the world.

Then His church was only one in number and essentially synonymous with his kingdom. “they were all with one accord in one place,” when such power fell as enabled them to increase from 120 to more than 3000 in one day!

Between Acts 1:14& 5:12, the “one accord” of that first church is mentioned as ongoing for days, weeks, and months, during which thousands more were saved and added.

In Acts 15:25 the Jerusalem council, addressing the business of the kingdom and multiple churches, were again “assembled with one accord.”

That “unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” was found at Ephesus at edge of Asia looking westward into the mission field of Europe. (Ephesians 4:3) and was continually exhorted to all of the churches as pleasing to God and a means of spiritual power.

While the apostles lived, much unity was achieved much of the time throughout the conquering kingdom of Christ. The results were phenomenal, greatly fulfilling the ancient prophecies of mass Gentile conversions, and

establishing the footholds all around the Mediterranean sea which would eventually complete the fulfillment of Daniel's 2:44 prophecy of Christianity vanquishing the pagan kingdoms wherever it came.

Only one other comparable season of conquest is recorded in history. That is the one that coincided with the church slowly coming out of centuries of hiding, persecution being somewhat buffered by the Protestant reformation, migrating to the western hemisphere, being blessed with numerous conversions and exploding numbers, becoming the greatest single influence upon a unique new nation.

At the spiritual zenith of true revival in America and beyond, Baptists attained the greatest influence upon the United States of any other religious power, then slowly gave it up for the privilege of full acceptance by the Protestants by gradually becoming more like them by the same worldly conformance they always gravitate toward.

In the times of their great influence Baptists seized the moment by "enterprising great things" In the words of John Bunyan:

"WHERE UNITY AND PEACE ARE WANTING (lacking), THERE CAN BE *NO GREAT MATTERS ENTERPRISED*; WE CANNOT DO MUCH FOR GOD, NOR MUCH FOR ONE ANOTHER. WHEN THE DEVIL WOULD HINDER THE BRINGING TO PASS OF GOOD IN NATIONS AND CHURCHES, HE DIVIDES THEIR COUNSELS ... HE DIVIDES THEIR HEADS, THAT HE MAY DIVIDE THEIR HANDS." (p. 19-20)

"Thus if fares with churches, when once the devil of their own folly divides them; they will be so far from resisting him, that they will be soon subjected by him." (p.20)

"WE LEARN BY REASON, WHAT GREAT THINGS MAY BE DONE IN WORLDLY ACHIEVEMENTS WHERE UNITY IS; AND SHALL NOT REASON (ASSISTED WITH THE MOTIVES OF RELIGION) TEACH US, THAT UNITY AMONG CHRISTIANS MAY ENABLE THEM TO ENTERPRISE GREATER THINGS FOR CHRIST?" (P.21)

"... if Christians that are divided be ever famous for any thing, it will be, that they have often met together, and talked of this and the other thing, but they did nothing." (p.22)

Definition of "ENTERPRISE": (Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary) That which is undertaken, or attempted to be performed; a project attempted; particularly, a bold, or arduous or hazardous undertaking, either physical or moral. (modern Webster's) "An undertaking; project; specifically, (a) a *bold, difficult, dangerous, or important* one ..."

In the middle 1600's Rhode Island Baptists set the pattern for the American republic. That colony established the world's first secular government which guaranteed freedom of conscience and citizen equality. They cleverly adapted this from their model of church government taken from the teachings of Jesus. Was this a great enterprise or what?

From 1783 -1799 Virginia Baptists chose a "General Committee," which functioned primarily as a *political action committee* until Virginia's politicians had totally disestablished state religion and then led the federal constitutional process in forever forbidding religious establishment at the federal level. We owe our Bill of Rights and final universal acceptance of religious freedom in the whole United States to that Baptist "enterprise." *Shortly before this was accomplished, Baptist factions in Virginia "united" for the first time, under the name "United Baptists."*

Note that this committee was dissolved soon after both of these political goals crucial to Baptist future were fully accomplished. John Leland, the chief Baptist promoter of this *enterprise*, moved back to New England where he teamed up with Isaac Backus to promote disestablishment in the Puritan states also. By 1833 they had lived to see that *enterprise* fully accomplished. Thanks to Baptist *enterprise* freedom of religion became the American way.

Baptists soon became the foremost leaders in promotion "missions." In pursuit of this they attempted various enterprises to assist in this scriptural cause. For most of a century thousands of Baptist missionaries carried the gospel and established churches over much of the world. Years later, unspiritual and unscriptural methods copied from Protestant mass evangelists deceiving the masses in *this country* destroyed the work of most of these enterprises for God's cause and turned them to deception instead.

Educational and benevolent enterprises suffered the same fate. Worst of all, even most of the churches eventually succumbed to these errors in practice also.

Sound churches, for their own survival, one by one or few by few withdrew from this mass apostasy leaving all of the established enterprises behind also. Many of them, in looking for a scapegoat for so many sister churches succumbing to false evangelism and other modern innovations, targeted all *enterprises* as the culprit. This is unjustified! If there was any great error made in their enterprising spirit, it appears to be their attempts to make those enterprises too permanent instead of temporary for accomplishing specific goals. Permanent man-made institutions came to be regarded by too many Baptists as more important to Baptist future than the local scriptural churches themselves, which alone are Divine institutions. God was not pleased with this false perception. As the man-made institutions increasingly conformed to the world and embraced the evangelism of popular Protestant mass evangelists they in turn influenced many churches to adopt these abominable deceptive practices also, rather than to withstand the popular tide.

Since withdrawing from the mainstream, and partially misappropriating the blame for the loss of a once glorious and conquering Baptist kingdom, kingdom unity among the tattered remnants of surviving sound churches, except on a very small and temporary scale, has been rendered impossible! *There is little hope of ever again enterprising great things until the evolving judgmental attitude and prevalent distrust of anyone whose customs or*

*ideas differ from our own is corrected.* This is obviously a reversion to the "hardshell" attitude which destroyed so many old churches in the early 1800's when they opposed the groundwork of the vast missionary enterprise then being laid by the "missionary" Baptist churches. *We don't want to err again in putting too much trust in enterprises, but to eliminate them altogether as a matter of principle is a prescription for extinction.*

How shall we know what enterprises to initiate or endorse, and which ones to avoid? "Is there any Holy Ghost?" This is a question Elder Francis Wayland asked in his 1856 book on the principles and practices of Baptist Churches. Yes! But are we spiritual enough to discern His leadership, *especially when the enterprise appears impossible, outside our present traditions, and many skeptics among us are sure to oppose it as an "innovation"?*

Jesus sanctified himself that he might sanctify us. He set himself apart for God from this world as no other man ever had. No other man was ever so "separate from sinners." He prayed for our sanctification before he asked for our unity! The first is necessary to the second. We seem not to have comprehended that yet.

Worldliness is not sanctification. It is conformance to the world. Apostle Paul commanded, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) If our recent Baptists ancestors could observe our modern conformance in appearance and actions they would immediately identify our "love of the world" as our worst problem. Apostle John commanded, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the father is not in him." (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:2) This was written to the churches, not the unsaved. The love of the world and the love of God cannot co-exist simultaneously in our minds. One crowds out the other. If we did not love the world we would not try so hard to look like them, to blend in with them, so that they cannot immediately see a difference. It is not so much the appearance, however, as the wrong love, that prohibits our being sanctified (set apart) for the master's use. Abundance of the love of God is necessary to achieving *one accord*, which is impossible without it. How often we cringe as we hear preachers tell congregations, "there is nothing wrong with this or that," when referencing some vain and worldly activity of the sort which our Baptist forefathers frowned upon or even forbade their members to participate in!

Fleshliness, or carnality, is not sanctification either. All babes in Christ are naturally carnal. Only their human spirits have been sanctified thus far. Their lives are before them, with degree of sanctification depending upon crucifixion of their fleshly desires, and submission to the Holy Spirit. Paul told the carnal Corinthian church, "As long as there are envying, and strifes, and divisions among you, are ye not carnal and walk as men?" You are not acting like "saints" => holy ones, but like the wicked sinners of this world. James said, "*If you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish.*" (James 3:14-15) How often do we see Baptist people behaving like this when they think they are only "standing for the truth"! Divisions abound, but they are always blamed on the opposition. Carnality renders unity impossible. "*To be carnally minded is death.*" (Romans 8:6) Carnal mindedness is all a lost person can achieve, but shameful carnal mindedness is also possible for God's children. The result of it is death, rather than life, failure, rather than success in the conquests of Christ's kingdom.

Our lack of "separation," which is the root meaning of "sanctification," "consecration," "saint," "holiness" and other such biblical words, from worldliness and fleshliness renders spiritual unity or one accord *impossible*. It prevents spiritual vision, and "where there is no vision, the people perish." (Proverbs 29:18)

I am not interested in any enterprise except that which God orders. The nature of God-led enterprises, however, is a "*walk by faith, not by sight.*" (2nd Corinthians 5:7) Since you don't altogether know where you are going, Satan cannot find it out either, so as to organize counter-measures to defeat you. Because carnal and worldly minded children of God customarily walk by sight and by tradition without spiritual vision, they typically oppose whatever is conceived by visionary saints. Very often they can hinder and delay God's enterprise until Satan can figure out how to defeat it. This is very crucial among Baptists where majority democratic rule (as a minimum is) needed to proceed with any enterprise.

Francis Wayland set forth the idea that some enterprises do not lend themselves to church authority. This thought may be worthy of consideration, although it has long been counter to the emphasis of "Landmark" Baptist churches long separated from much enterprising of any kind. The logic is this. Some endeavors need such unity of supporters to succeed that they can scarcely proceed with a minority of stubborn dissenters weighing down the progress. On the other side of the consideration, it is questionable whether church members in total agreement with the clearly Biblical functions of their church should be forced to be dragged along by a majority voting for enterprises which are a doubtful function of scriptural churches. The manner used to enterprise during the greatness of the Baptist kingdom of the 1800's was often through special agencies set up by Baptist volunteers for one specific goal. Charitable and spiritual churches did not think it their prerogative or duty to interfere with members participation in such agencies as long as there were no activities specifically prohibited by scripture involved. To Wayland, even Sunday School fell in this category (???)

The political action committee of the Virginia Separate Baptists (1783-1799) lasted 16 years. In that time a ban on either religious persecution or favoritism was secured for not only Virginia, but in the United States Constitution as well, by the efforts of them and the politicians they influenced. As soon as this task was complete, they dissolved that committee.

Could it be that the greatest error of what later became the "convention Baptists" was that they attempted to establish permanent enterprises instead of temporary ones to accomplish an immediate need? Over time those enterprises evolved into usurpers of church authority. God needed only one permanent institution, and that is the church of Jesus Christ, but the "hardshell" doctrine of no enterprises is a road to failure.

The Particular Baptists prospered in the 1700's in England far more than the General (atonement) Baptists whose progress had been hindered by Quaker subversions and perhaps other hindrances. But by mid-century they had become so Calvinistic and "hardshell" that they were not properly evangelizing England. It was then that God raised up three "Methodists" by saving them out of the Church of England to do that job for them. Within a half-century Methodist influence had somewhat modified this stifling Baptist attitude. *Because God's churches would not enterprise, "deliverance arose from another place!" (Esther 4:14)*

Even after this, when William Carey, in the late 1700's, first presented his burden to evangelize India to his Particular Baptist fellowship, he was reportedly ordered to sit down by one of the elder preachers with the reasoning that Almighty God did not need Carey to evangelize the heathen if He was minded to do so. That old man did not perceive that Carey was God's chosen instrument to evangelize India, and that he and his "hardshell" tradition was opposing God! Fortunately, the influential Andrew Fuller did perceive the will of God and got behind this enterprise, which was the beginning of a century of very successful foreign missions from England and the United States. Fuller's views on the atonement were refined, perhaps by these happenings, and his later writings did much to pull Baptists back from a radical extreme of Calvinism.

#### QUOTES FROM JOHN BUNYAN'S BOOKLET ON UNITY

*Things essential to salvation and church communion (fellowship) only are indispensable without which there can be no unity and peace 1) true faith, 2) baptism, 3) a holy and blameless behavior. (p.9)*

*"Unity and peace may consist with the ignorance of many truths, and the holding of some errors; or else this duty of peace would not be practicable by any on this side perfection." (p.6)*

*"Holiness of life is essential to church communion (fellowship). Because it seems to be the reason Christ founded a church in the world. Viz. that men might thereby be watched over and kept from falling; and that if any be overtaken in a fault; he that is spiritual might restore him ..." (p.9)*

*"How needful it is for Christians to distinguish (if ever they would be at peace and unity) between those truths which are essential to church-communion. And those that are not?" (p.12)*

*("Going to seed" on regional traditions is causing great disunity in the kingdom of God at present! Baptists may adopt positions not clearly grounded in scripture and use them to advantage, but unless the practice is specifically required by the Holy Scriptures they should never attempt to force them upon others. Such attempted coercion normally takes the form of threats of non-fellowship.)*

*"O how well it would be with churches, if they were but half as zealous for the great and plain, and indisputable things, and the more chargeable and costly things of religion, as they are for things doubtful or less necessary, or for things that are no charge to them, and cost them nothing but the breath of contention ..." (p.12)*

*"See the spirit that was among the primitive professors. Knowing and believing how much it concerned them, in the propagating of Christianity, to show forth love to one another, (that so all might know them to be Christ's disciples,) rather than there should be any complainings among them, they sold all they had." (p.13)*

*"If we were more in a sense of our ignorance and imperfections, we would carry it better towards those who differ from us. Then we would be more in the spirit of meekness and forbearance; that thereby we might bring others (or be brought by others) to the knowledge of the truth." (p.13)*

*"What is it that embitters church communion (fellowship), and makes it burdensome, but divisions? Have you not heard many complain, that they are weary of church-communion, because of church contention?" (p.17)*

*"How often have many redeemed time (even in seed-time and harvest) when they could scarce afford it, to go to church; and, by reason of their divisions, come home worse than they went, repenting that they have spent so much precious time to so little benefit?" (p.18)*

*"...many churches spend most of their time in jangling and contending about those things which are neither essential to salvation or church-communion: and that which is worse, about such doubtful questions as they are never able to give an infallible solution of." (p.19)*

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*"... if Christians that are divided be ever famous for any thing, it will be, that they have often met together, and talked of this and the other thing, but they did nothing." (p.22)*

*"Where unity and peace are wanting, there the weak are wounded, and the wicked are hardened." (p.22)*

*"Divisions, and want of peace, keep those out of the church that would come in; and cause many to go out that are in." (p.22)*

*"The Jews ... glossing upon that text in Isaiah 11:6, where it is prophesied, That the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and that there will be none left to hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain: they, I say, interpreting these things, to signify the concord and peace that shall be among the people that shall own the Messiah, do from hence conclude, that the Messiah is not yet come, because of the contentions and divisions that are among those that profess him." (p.23)*

If "a little folly" on the part of one "who is in reputation of wisdom and honor" is like the "stinking savor" of "dead flies in the ointment of the apothecary," (Ecclesiastes 10:1) how much greater is the tragedy when that "one who is in reputation" is a church of the living God? Disunity leading to strifes and misdeeds against one another and often wrong acts of the majority, most frequently manifested in chaotic business meetings, are always repulsive to the beholders, and serve to drive away those who need the church the most. Many lost people, unlearned children of God, and new, young, and weak members are alienated by such spectacles. Is this why Eugene Ditzler, a Methodist, repeatedly accused Baptists of "mobocracy" in a debate with J. R. Graves?

Disunity drives people away from church and Christianity; leads to acts by God's people which wound the tender hearts of babes in Christ and earnestly seeking lost souls; grieves the Holy Spirit of God; makes great enterprises impossible; (in effect) defeats the church's mission in this world.

#### DISUNITY MAKES GREAT ENTERPRISES IMPOSSIBLE!

*What great enterprises are needed? Proper education is a crucial one! So far we have barely addressed this desperate need in our rapidly crumbling society. Most Baptists seem to be in a deadly slumber of blurred reality about this while their own children are being mined away by the constant erosion described below.*

American citizens, Christians, even our churches, and more especially our children, are gradually absorbing more of their way of reasoning from the world-view around them than from Biblical and traditional American teaching. That world-view is really a disguised revival of the old pagan earth worship which makes nature the most immortal consideration.

Results: The hope of eternity having been banished for most people, the most noble enterprises know to man have become attempted perfection of the flawed systems of present human affairs. Only a few serious-minded people engage these pursuits, however.

The bulk of humanity has turned to vanities, worldliness, and carnality as the primary occupiers of their minds, while even most of the professing Christian population has come to accept these barriers to God's fellowship as all right, or even good, and the line between fantasy and reality is becoming increasingly blurred for all citizens.

Vanities: *"And they rejected His statutes, and His covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He testified against them, and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them." (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 17:15)*

*"I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." (Solomon in Ecclesiastes 1:14) "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." (Eccles. 2:11)*

Worldliness: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world." (2<sup>nd</sup> John 2:15-16) Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2)*

Fleshliness: *"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:6-7) "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (rather than as saints of God?) (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:3)*

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR RECOVERY:

First: return to requiring members to attend church on pain of discipline.

Second: Choose pastors that are "able to teach" (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 3:2) "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) and who have such "vision" (Prov. 29:18) as prevents the people from perishing from "lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

Third: Return to a weekly church service that is primarily dedicated to strengthening one another and the whole church rather than preaching to “the lost,” most of whom are not present. This was the original function of the Lord’s day meeting!

Fourth: Teach the people their duty to evangelize all week as they go about their daily lives in this world.

Fifth: Teach Christian parents that it is their sacred duty to see to the proper education of their own children. Nothing is clearer in the Bible than the fact that this responsibility should not be handed over to the state or anyone else, and that God intended for children to be with their parents most of the time as they grow up. Whatever occupations are conducive to this Biblical order need to be pursued instead of those which tend toward opposite results. Whatever the churches can do to aid the parents in this task, which is also essential to survival of the churches, they ought to embrace.

Sixth: Re-teach the truth that *a normal Christian life* is a pilgrim journey through a hostile environment that should not to be expected to be easy. We are not meant to feel at home in this world, which is not our home. This natural love of ease is one of Satan’s greatest advantages over us. We should not expect the *enterprises which God orders up* for us to use in conquering this sinful world to be easy tasks. If fact, they will prove impossible without the grace of God, and are much better accomplished through a unified march of the armies of the living God.

Seventh: Baptist meetings should never manifest even “a little folly” of selfish, self-centered, or self-serving acts, let alone such chaotic proceedings as might be called “mobocracy.” Conspiracy and political maneuvering should never happen.

#### CONCLUDING WORDS:

As our culture crumbles before our very eyes because of its departure from God, there is a desperate need for unity and power and spiritual vision to be regained by the scattered remnants of Christ’s kingdom. As has been proven by two notable periods in history, results of *one accord*, in terms of conquering the kingdoms of sin, can be phenomenal!

We now have the hindsight to know that in 1787 the future welfare of the world was dependent on the unity of a portion of Christ’s Kingdom. They could not have known the entire results, but they unified as Jesus said, and religious freedom was ensured, while the churches experienced the greatest revival since the apostles’ age.

In 2005, as this blessed nation and culture they helped to build falls toward certain ruin, the world’s future is again dependent on unity in Christ’s kingdom. If we do not arise to this challenge, “deliverance” of God’s plan and purpose “shall arise ... from another place” (perhaps Africa ?) but “we and our father’s house will be destroyed.” (Esther 4:14)