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Unity is becoming a unit, moving as one. The world has examples of unity, but it's imperfect unity. The best thing we can liken it to is a team. A team has one purpose and one goal, to score or to defend, yet there is still imperfect unity.

Christian unity is one goal, one purpose, one movement - we move as one, we become one. Worldly unity is based on an agreement or compromise. Countries that unite in unity, they become united nations, they sign treaty agreements for mutual compromise. "I won't attack you, if I get attacked, you defend me, you get attacked, I defend you." But what happens when those agreements or mutual compromises are broken? What happens with contracts? If someone is in breach of contract, you sue them. In countries, they wage war.

This is not what Christian unity is based on. Yes, we come into agreement, yes, we have mutual compromise, but that is not the foundation. Christian foundation is unity of the Spirit, becoming that one unit.

What is the unity of the Spirit?

John 17:20-21

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Jesus is praying and He's saying that as Him and the Father and the Holy Spirit are one, so must we become one. So must we become one with each other and with God. The same Spirit that is living in you and in me, connects us. That is the foundation of our unity, so that when agreements and compromises are broken, we do not sue and wage war against each other, because our foundation is not that agreement or compromise, it is based on the oneness we are joined together for.

Ephesians 4:1-6

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Paul says, "I implore you", he is begging them to preserve the unity we've been called for.

"*With humility*" – I am not going to use my pride, to overwhelm your ideas or what you've been called to. What I've been called to is not greater than what you've been called to, it's about what we've been called to together.

"*gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love*" – That is speaking about how we deal with each other. If I do something wrong, are you going to respond in anger, or with gentleness, patience, tolerance, and love?

One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God – one, one, one.

When I look at examples of unity, I think of the tower of Babel in Genesis, where a people came together with one purpose and had one language – and God said, *“nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them”*, because they have one goal, one purpose, they are one person – what they set out to do will not be stopped.

“I have to go down and intervene, because what they are doing is unrighteous”, BUT He said that what they set out to do, would not be stopped, because they were one. God had to intervene, because their goal was unrighteous, but then we look at the early church...

Acts 4:32-33

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

They were of one heart and one soul. Do you think they had no differences? Do you think they didn't have disagreements? They had disagreements, they had differences, but that proves that disagreements do not need to break the unity.

How?

God created all of us different. He put the differences, your talents, your personality, He set together – and He created unity. That tells me that we must be able to walk in unity, regardless of our differences. It does not matter if we think our personalities clash. The unity we are called to is one body, and the body has different parts, and each part has a different purpose.

Although we compromise on differences or on ideas, it does not mean we compromise with sin. Christians do not compromise in sin, that is where we draw the line. If you are doing wrong, it is our responsibility to rebuke and correct in love. Other than that, if you have an idea that is different than my idea, is it really so much for me to stop the argument and say, *“Let's run with your idea”*? And can I get behind you and run with your idea? That is how the early church became one, by small compromises. We all have different ideas, different personalities, different ways of doing things. People that love, care, and have respect for each other can break their unity, because of tiny differences. We allow those tiny differences to get between the way we feel about each other, how we respond to those around us. We should be able to look beyond the difference and stick in the love, in the purpose, in the unity.

What the early church could do with this unity:

Acts 4:33

And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

1. Boldness and impact in preaching

They could do this, because they were one, because there were people behind them, because of the people that were supporting them, because of the church praying for them.

Acts 4:34-37

For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need. Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

2. No needy person among them

Why? Because the needs of the one, became the needs of everyone. The purpose of the one, was joined with the purpose of the other one. Their money, time and effort was put into that person's needs.

Acts 5:12-16

At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

3. Signs, wonders and healing

Signs, wonders and healing were coming from this unity. It was not that Peter had it in himself, but it is because the purpose that they were called for, the presence of God they had in their lives. It is because of the unity that they walked in that they were able to do these things. Not because of the one, but because of everyone.

Acts 5:17-42

But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life." Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought. But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back, saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside." Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned). When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him." But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God." They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

4. Protection

Just before this, Jesus was crucified, He rose from the dead, He spoke to His people, encouraged them and then the early church began their movement. The people that were questioning the apostles, were the people that sent Jesus to the cross. They killed Jesus, yet they did not kill them, for God was protecting them. Not only did He send an angel to open the prison doors, but He did not tell them to go into hiding. He told them to go preach the message He has called them to preach. They went to go preach and they were called back in, but the guards were even to scared to use violence. Jesus was the lamb before the slaughter, He barely spoke when questioned and when asked if He was the Son of God,

He would say "It is as you say". These men were speaking with great boldness. They said, "you killed Him, His blood is on your hands.", and they were not killed for what they said. The message they were preaching was even considered to have filled the whole Jerusalem by the counsel.

Why is unity so powerful?

Unity invites the presence of God

Matthew 18:19-20

"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

We are in a season of God-encounter. We can invite the presence of God into our lives.

"In My name" – We need to do introspection. Why are you gathered? In who's name are we gathered? Why are we here? For God, to glorify His name, to fulfill His plans and purposes or is it because you are expected to be there, for self-promotion or pride? We need to gather for the right reasons so that we can invite the presence of God into our lives.

Ananias and Sapphira were not honest about the total amount that they gave as a blessing, and they were killed for it. Why? Because of the presence of God that was in this season that the people were walking in. They lied in the presence of God. When Peter questioned them, he said, "Why have you lied to the Holy Spirit?", not "Why have you lied to me?". They lied to the Holy Spirit. They lied to themselves. Because of that, they dies.

We need to make sure we are not lying to ourselves, we are definitely not lying to God, and because of the unity we want to step into, we must not lie to each other.

Is it such a big thing to set aside yourself, your plans and purposes to be able to push someone else into their destiny, to be used by God to push the church into it's destiny, to push your neighbour into his destiny? Is it such a big thing to set your own motives, your own pride, your own ideas aside so that we can accomplish this unity we have been called for?