

THE MANNER OF ATTAINING UNITY

I. Negative

A. Let nothing be done through strife

1. Meaning

a) Literally, strife is self-seeking, selfish ambition and self-interest

(1) It is all about self: I, me and myself or sheer selfishness!

(2) And when we are only concerned about ourselves and we don't get our way,

b) what we get is strife

(1) And strife is fighting, quarrelling and arguments till we get our way

(2) It is party-spirit, factions, rivalry and contending (II Cor. 2.20)

(3) It is all about our ego with the purpose of advancing self and driven by personal desire. And therefore, it is destructive and disruptive

2. Examples

a) you will see that in young children, in their immaturity, when they set their eyes on something, they will wail and scream at the top of their lungs till their parents will give in

b) You have that happening in I Cor. 1, where there was party spirit in the Corinthian church

(1) they divided themselves among their favourite apostle - they were following men

(2) some belonged to the Paul's party, some Apollos party, others Cephas party and even Christ's party

3. But, the way to get things done in the church is not through strife for this is earthly wisdom and not the wisdom of God

a) According to James 3.14, strife is connected to envy and the next verse says that this wisdom is not heavenly but earthly, sensual and devilish and thus there is confusion and every evil work

b) And in contrast to that, heavenly wisdom is pure, without partiality, without hypocrisy, easy to be in-treated, full of mercy and good fruits

c) And strife is listed as the work of the flesh in contrast to the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5.22)

d) Therefore, unity is not achieved by strife

B. Let nothing be done through vain-glory

1. Vainglory, literally is, empty deceit, groundless boastings

a) It is the state of mind that seeks personal glory

(1) he arrogantly asserts that he only has the right opinion and others have got it wrong but in fact, his opinion is in error

(2) he has an erroneous opinion of himself

(3) he is conceited without reason - he is deluded

b) he seeks self promotion and self glory

(1) He will fight to prove himself supreme

(2) It is the possessiveness of power and control that seeks to promote self

2. And the next two virtues corrects the first two negative principles

a) it deals with selfishness and seeking vainglory

b) and has in its place lowliness of mind and seeking the things of others

II. Positive

- A. But, in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than ourselves
1. Lowliness of mind is one word in the Greek and can be translated humility of mind which is a virtue
 - a) Before the New Testament era, this word would often describe the mentality of a slave, base, shabby, common, valueless and useless
 - b) It is a term of derision and something which is ugly and not to sought for and never to be admired
 - c) But, in the New Testament, this word has the meaning of humility of mind which leads us to view others better than ourselves
 2. How do we consider others better than ourselves
 - a) This is so contrary to our natures for by nature, we think we are better than others, if not the best of the best
 - (1) We have a false and conceited opinion of ourselves and we are proud
 - (2) and the devil is one proud angel
 - (a) He was dissatisfied with his lot and therefore he wanted to have the place of honour and power that belongs to God
 - (b) and for that, God cast him out of heaven
 - b) A deep knowledge of our sins
 - (1) Did not the apostle Paul confessed that he was the chief of sinners in I Tim. 1.15? That this is a faithful saying and worthy to be accepted: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinner, of whom I am chief
 - (2) and if we are really honest with ourselves, we too will make the same confession and mean it
 - (a) Our depravity is deep
 - (b) We sin against God daily
 - (3) And such a knowledge of our sins will cause us be lowly in mind and esteem others better than ourselves
- B. Look not every man on his own things but every man on the things on others
1. To look not every man on his own things is against our nature
 - a) We tend to look only for our own welfare and benefit
 - (1) This is what our flesh tells us and what the world tells us: look out for yourselves
 - (2) in another sense we need to see to our own needs
 - (3) We have our goals, ambitions, desires, and our calling and use of our gifts
 - b) But note that the apostle does not condemn us looking on our own things
 - (1) He says, look beyond that, so that you must also look on the things of others - There are others who have needs
 - (a) Needs for fellowship - lonely, and great discouraged
 - (b) Needs to receive the ministry of the Word
 - (c) Needs to be built up in the faith
 - (2) And so, be on the look out for others in the church
 - (a) do not always stick to your cliques or your circle of friends and chatting round with your good old friends
 - (b) but look out for those
 - (i) who sit all alone, who stands all alone in the church
 - (ii) and those who are with others but are very lonely
 - (c) Mothers, fathers, singles, youths who need encouragement
 - c) Humility is the key to unity
 - (1) God alone can made us humble
 - (2) Without humility, that is pride, strife, envies and the seeking of vainglory and the result is that there is no unity
 - (3) But with humility, there is unity amongst the people of God
 2. And in verse 5, let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus

- a) The apostle Paul sets Christ as the example who possesses all the right attitudes that he has been speaking about
 - (1) He did not nothing from selfishness but what he did was that he came to fulfill Father's will
 - (2) Neither did he do anything of empty deceit nor did he seek his own things but he seek the eternal welfare for the elect
 - (3) and this is clearly seen in his incarnation and death
 - (4) and finally, God exalted him highly and given him the highest name
- b) We will continue this more tomorrow morning. Amen