

Some Thoughts on Religious Division

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We interrupt our normal look at the Minor Prophets since we will still be in Zechariah in this morning's Bible class. We will resume next week with Malachi. But since unity is on our minds right now, here are some thoughts I have about religious division.

For one thing, religious division gets in the way of the church's greatest mission. The Lord gave a commission to His disciples to preach the gospel to all nations for this is what mankind needs more than anything else. There are the poor to consider but everyone has a soul in need of saving, making salvation the church's greatest focus. In one generation, they accomplished that goal. Paul said, "if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister." (Col. 1:23.) They did this without much distraction of various divisions and practices. But today the job is much harder for that very reason. Christianity has over 2000 denominations, each in competition with the other for people to come to their group. In any town, there will be four different groups on a street corner, each looking at the other while wanting people to come to their building. They may say they are unified under Christ but that can't be as long as said competition exists. There is too much effort being expended on proselyting members and warring against religious bodies. Jesus is the Head of the church and as long as that is ignored in favor of "ruling" the church with councils, creeds, and conferences, religious division will continue to reign and get in the way of preaching the gospel to all of mankind.

Secondly, think of all the money and effort being expended to build a better building than other groups. How much money is being spent to build and maintain so many "church buildings" in a community. What if all that money and effort could be spent in proclaiming the gospel? How many poor folks could be helped if the community had a united church?

Thirdly, what of the lack of influence a divided church has in a community. Today, there is an alarming increase in broken homes. Crime is on the increase. Children are subjected to a lack of parenting and all sorts of evil influences. Drugs and alcohol ruin lives. And where is the church? Is there a solid voice coming from the church to offer God's solutions to the problems of sin? A united church could have such an impact on society. Think about it. If everybody were united Christians, what kind of TV shows would Hollywood be producing? Where would the alcohol industry be or who would be buying drugs? How many divorce lawyers would there be in business?

Fourth, doesn't religious division hurt the message of salvation? Those who need salvation turn a deaf ear to any plea from people who can't even agree on what saves. People ask questions like, "Which church should I choose? How can I know which one is right?" Such questions would never be asked if Christianity was united. Remember that Jesus warned, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it" (Matt. 24:23.) That's because Jesus is at the right hand of God and no human being gets to act on His behalf or install Him as the Christ of their group. There needs to be Christian unity under the One Head of the church not in a multitude of bodies. Those who believe in Jesus Christ must be united "in Him."