

# Christian Unity in a Divide World

## Selected Texts

### Introduction

The most unified, loving institution in the entire world ought to be the church of Jesus Christ. Unity is not uniformity, where everyone is the same. Unity is when a diverse group of people come together and say, despite our differences, we have more important things in common and we are united in a common purpose because we have a common identity. For Christians, this common purpose is the glorifying God, and the common identity is being “in Christ.”

Mask vs. No Mask | Republican vs. Democrats | Hymns vs. Praise Songs | Aggies vs. Longhorns

### Exposition

#### **I. Pursue Christian Unity Because of the Lordship of Christ (Romans 14:1-15:4)**

<sup>1</sup> Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. <sup>2</sup> One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

<sup>5</sup> One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. <sup>6</sup> Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. <sup>8</sup> If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. <sup>9</sup> For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

<sup>10</sup> You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. <sup>11</sup> It is written:

“ ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,  
‘every knee will bow before me;  
every tongue will acknowledge God.’ ”

<sup>12</sup> So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. <sup>14</sup> I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. <sup>15</sup> If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. <sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. <sup>17</sup> For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, <sup>18</sup> because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.

<sup>19</sup> Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. <sup>20</sup> Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. <sup>21</sup> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.

<sup>22</sup> So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. <sup>23</sup> But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

<sup>15:1</sup> We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. <sup>3</sup> For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” <sup>4</sup> For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

The pursuit of Christian unity demonstrates our submission to the lordship of Christ.

## II. Pursue Christian Unity Because of the Work of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:1-6)

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The pursuit of Christian unity reflects the work of the Spirit in our lives and in our church.

## III. Pursue Christian Unity Because of the Call to Love (Galatians 5:15-17)

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. <sup>14</sup> For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup> If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

The pursuit of Christian unity expresses our obedience to the call to love one another.

## IV. Pursue Christian Unity Because of the Hope of Eternity (1 Peter 3:8-9)

Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. <sup>9</sup> Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

The pursuit of Christian unity reveals our hope in the eternal inheritance that is ours in Christ.

## V. Pursue Christian Unity Because of the Grace of God (Colossians 3:12-17)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The pursuit of Christian unity deepens our understanding of the grace of God toward us in the gospel.

## Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; <sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. <sup>20</sup> On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If you are a Christian, then this is what God has called us to. He does not expect us to fulfill and obey these commands in our strength apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. He has promised to work in us to will and to do His good pleasure. Yet, he also calls us by grace to pursue this good pleasure.

So, as Christians, I am calling us to pursue Christian unity in this divided world as a testimony of God's grace and mercy toward us.

I am calling us to live in an understandable way with those who hold different opinions than us on issues that Scripture leaves in the realm of conscience.

I am asking you to fight for unity in the body of Christ in private and in public. Resist the temptation to fight more for your rights than you do for righteousness. Don't give into Satan's schemes which seek to destroy you and destroy the church of Jesus Christ. Pursue Christian unity for the glory of God and the good of others!

God has made this pursuit of unity possible by His grace. Before unity and reconciliation with others is possible, we must be united to Christ and reconciled to God. All our unity depends upon our relationship with God, and our relationship with God depends upon grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Have you placed your trust in Christ? Have you received his grace by faith?