

IS THE LORD PLEASED WITH RELIGIOUS DIVISION?

The religious world round about us is extremely divided. Just look around and you will see Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and on and on the list could go. Many religious groups hold views totally contrary to another group, yet they have agreed to disagree. Does the Lord approve of this division? Is it o.k. to attend the church of your choice? What does God's word have to say about religious division? Let us notice the Bible answer.

The very fact that the Lord prayed for unity among his followers makes religious division contrary to his will. As Jesus prepared for his death upon the cross, he prayed to the Father for his followers (Jn.17:1-26). In the face of death, the Savior thought it fitting to pray for religious unity! Jesus first prays for the apostles, that they may remain united (17:1-19). However, his prayer is not for the apostles only. Christ also prays for those who would follow him as a result of the work of the apostles (17:20-23). The purpose of this religious unity is to show the world that God sent His only begotten Son into the world to save those that obey him (17:21). As long as the religious world continues to be divided, the Lord's prayer is left unfulfilled, and the world is denied the privilege of knowing that God send His Son into the world to redeem man from sin.

Paul faced the problem of religious division in the church at Corinth (1 Cor.1:10-15). The brethren there were dividing themselves based upon their loyalty to men. Some were following Apollos. Some were following Paul. Still others were following Christ. Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Christ for that matter, approved of such division. Paul begged ("beseech") the Corinthian brethren to unite themselves religiously. This was not only Paul's wish, but it was given as a command by the authority of Jesus Christ. They were to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and they were to speak the same thing.

This is a far cry from what is being said in the religious world today. Man says, "believe what you want to believe." Denominations say it is o.k. to believe something totally contrary to what someone else believes. Some say that what is true to you may not be true to someone else, even though they are reading the same objective truth of God's word. Such statements as these are in complete opposition to the prayer of Jesus and the command of Paul.

Religious division is sinful. In order to be pleasing to God, we must be united religiously. This can be accomplished. It is possible to be united, else Jesus would not have prayed for such. Religious unity can be achieved when men decide to leave the doctrines and commandments of men, and cleave unto the word of God. If we follow the word of God, and the word of God only, then we will be united religiously as the Lord prayed we would be. Oh that all men would make the decision to give up everything but the Bible in all matters religious!

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