

# Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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## Practicing Fellowship in the Oneness of the Body of Christ

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The question, "How does one avoid denominationalism yet practice fellowship in the oneness of the body of Christ?" is a very important one which I only wish more were asking. I'm not even sure that I can answer it adequately, yet I will try to do so with His help. I believe that the key to the answer lies in the reality of the crucified/resurrected life we now have in Christ. We are dead and risen with Christ, and our life is now hidden in Christ with God. He is the head of the Church, which is His body. Our first loyalty must

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always be to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are first to obey Him. His commandment is that we love one another even as He has loved us. Love is to be the true mark of a disciple - John 13:34-35. If we speak the truth in love, then we will always be seeking to build up and not tear down our fellow saints. If we love God, we will obey Him - John 14:21, 23-24. If we love others, we will obey Him - 1 John 5:2. Quite simple isn't it?! Denominationalism is primarily a spirit or attitude of pride in association. It is a reflection of the flesh still active in a believer's life. It is a denial of our true life and identity being in Christ above. Here then are some principles which we

must actively apply if we are to avoid the sectarian spirit regardless of what group we decide to associate with.

**F**irst of all, we must recognize that the key condition of membership in the true universal church is a common life shared with God in Christ. This life is received through repentance toward God and faith in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ - John 17:3; Acts 20:21; 1 John 5:11-12. We are told to receive one another just as Christ has received us - Romans 15:7.

**S**econdly, no teacher or group has a "corner" on the truth. Rather, the Lord has warned us that all earthly teachers have error - James 3:1-2. Therefore, we must be careful not to think too highly of ourselves or of the ones with whom we associate. To do so is to become self-righteous, a sure death blow to loving as He has commanded us to be doing.

**F**urther, we must realize that there is a certain mystery to all divine truth simply because man cannot comprehend all that God is. Thus, no theology is 100% correct. Therefore, a disciple must always remain teachable. Further, we must acknowledge that no "denomination" has an adequate understanding of the truth in order to declare themselves the true church of God on earth. Rather, we need every member in the body to supply what others may be lacking. What God requires of man is to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him - Micah 6:8. True and living faith is primarily a function of relationship...not

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structure or wealth or power...first with God and then with one's fellow man. Love cannot be known or expressed in isolation. Even before the creation as we know it, God existed as a loving relationship within Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (a great mystery of the faith!). The hardest thing to sustain in this life is a relationship. Better is a dinner

of herbs where love is than a fatted calf with hatred - Proverbs 15:17.

**F**inally, the sum of what is being said is this. The true church recognizes Christ as its head and all members as living, vital, functioning parts of His body - 1 Peter 2:5-9. Each member is to walk humbly before God

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and with others, recognizing that no one member is sufficient unto himself, but rather that all members are needed to make up the whole of God's active witness of Himself on this earth. Whatever structures we find ourselves associated with are presently tainted by the very imperfections of their organizers. Therefore, we live within this world but not of it. Our life is not found in a system or organization but in Christ above. If we

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**I** hope these thoughts are helpful to you. We all need to continue to seek after His face with diligence. The day will soon arrive when He will appear with all His saints to reward those who have set their hearts to honor Him. Then, all will glorify Him for His work of grace in the lives of His people, and the great mysteries of the faith will be known in the fullness of love which continues to pass all knowledge or understanding. God is love.

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