April 2010

POWER

"... the gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation ..." (Romans 1:16)

Endeavoring To Keep The Unity Of The Spirit

by Wade L. Webster

To the saints at Ephesus, Paul wrote, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Endeavoring means "to make effort" or to "labor" and keep means "to guard from loss or injury…by keeping the eye upon." Clearly, great energy and effort is required to keep the unity of the Spirit. After all, unity can be lost very easily.

Sadly, unity had been lost in the church at Corinth. Upon hearing from the household of Chloe that there were "contentions" and divisions at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11; 3:3), Paul wrote to them begging them to be united. We read:

> *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10; cf. Rom. 2:16; 15:5-6; Phil. 1:27; 1 Pet. 3:8; 2 Cor.* 13:11)."

Although they were together physically, they were worlds apart spiritually. Paul wrote, "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it" (1 Cor. 11:18; cf. Rom. 15:7; 1 Pet. 4:9). Paul made clear that this division was contrary to the design and desire of God. He wrote:

> *"For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12:24-25)."*

Please note that the members were to have the "same care" one for another. They were not to care for one more than another. Earlier in the letter, he declared:

> *"And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another (1 Cor. 4:6)."*

In like manner, to the saints at Philippi, Paul wrote, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2:2; cf. 4:2; John 13:34-35; Jam. 3:17; Rom. 15:5). Repeatedly, in the letter that he penned to Corinth, Paul called Christ into focus. He knew that the only way to keep unity was by fixing one's eyes and mind on Jesus. In this lesson, we want to see three things as we focus on Jesus.

The Prayer That Jesus Prayed

In His prayer for His disciples, Jesus prayed:

> *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:20-23)."*

The early church did their best to fulfill this prayer of the Lord. Luke records:

> *"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their*

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meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:46; cf. John 13:34-35)."

Furthermore, Luke recorded, *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common (Acts 4:32)."*

Please note that they were of one heart and one soul.

Today, we need to consider anew the prayer that Jesus prayed for His disciples. If we will do so, then it will help us to keep the unity of the Spirit.

The Price
That Jesus Paid

A tremendous price was paid for the church, the one body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). Jesus "gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). He "purchased it with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

It should be noted that the church, the one body, is made up of many members. To the saints at Corinth, Paul wrote:

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many (1 Cor. 12:12-14)."

Within the context, Paul went on to explain the importance of every member of the body. Although every member doesn't have the same function, they all have the same worth. After all, each member is purchased at the same high price (1 Cor. 6:20).

I believe that one of the ugliest things about division is the fact that it ignores the price that was paid for each individual member of the body. A least a couple of times within the epistles that he penned, Paul encouraged the brethren to consider how their actions could affect a brother or a sister in Christ. Please note that as Paul did so, he reminded them of the price that Jesus had paid. To the Christians at Corinth, Paul wrote, "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? (1 Cor. 8:11). In like manner, to the redeemed at Rome, Paul wrote, "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died" (Rom. 14:15). Please note that Christ died even for the weak brother. Although the strong brother is not to let the weak brother control the church, he is to consider the tremendous price that was paid for the weak brother and act accordingly.

We must never forget that Jesus died to reconcile men to God and to one another in the one body. To the elect at Ephesus, Paul wrote:

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Eph. 2:13-16)."

Division ignores the price the Jesus paid for unity. It separates that which Christ died to bring together.

Today, we need to consider again the price that Jesus paid for the church. If we will do so, it will help us to keep the unity of the Spirit.

The Peril
That Christ Portrayed

Mark records an occasion when the scribes came down from Jerusalem and accused Jesus of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils (Mk. 3:22). Jesus' response to the scribes teaches

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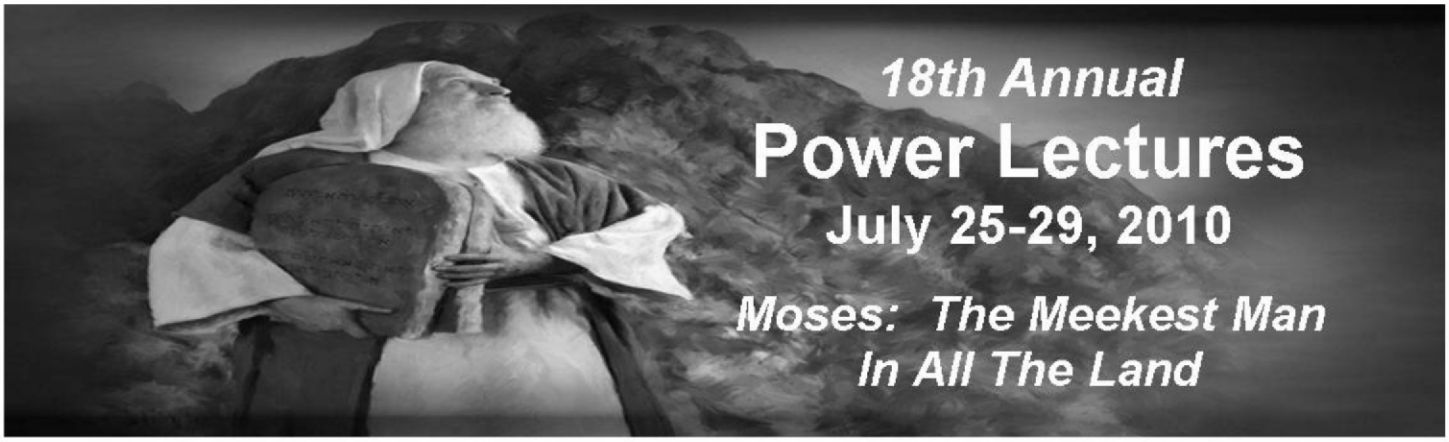

Sunday

9:30 A.M. *Eldad & Medad: The Spirit That Dwelleth In Us Lusteth To Envy*
Robert Jefferies

10:30 A.M. *Moses: A Great Prophet Who Personified A Greater*
Keith Mosher, Sr.

6:00 P.M. *When Society Wages War On Boys* – Brad Harrub

7:00 P.M. *The Legacy Of Amram & Jochebed: How To Raise Your Son To Be A Leader Among God's People*
Glenn Colley

Monday

9:00 A.M. *Weak Leaders: What Did This People Unto Thee?*
Dave Leonard

10:00 A.M. *Moses: Who Built According To The Pattern*
Curtis Cates

11:00 A.M. *And He Began To Make Excuse – Who Am I?*
Gary Hampton

1:00 P.M. Korah, Dathan, & Abiram: Swallowing Up The Competition
Todd Clippard

2:00 P.M. *Passing The Mantle: Making Sure The Work Doesn't Die With You*
Bob Prichard

2:00 P.M. (Ladies Class) *Helping Your Husband To Be A Leader Of God's People*
Cindy Colley

7:00 P.M. *Loving The People You Lead*
Allen Webster

8:00 P.M. *When The People Murmur*
B.J. Clarke

Tuesday

9:00 A.M. *When A Meek Man Gets Mad*
Patrick Morrison

10:00 A.M. *Learned In All The Wisdom Of The Egyptians: Keeping Your Faith While Receiving A Secular Education*
Dan Cates

11:00 A.M. *Keeping The Flock: What God Taught Moses On The Backside Of The Desert*
James Segars

1:00 P.M. *When Success Depends Upon You And Your Hands Are Heavy*
Chuck Webster

2:00 P.M. *Moses And The Magicians*
Lee Davis

2:00 P.M. (Ladies Class) *Moving From The Shadows To The Son & From The Imperfect To The Perfect*
Teresa Hampton

7:00 P.M. *Refusing To Compromise: There Shall Not An Hoof Be Left Behind* – Greg Dismuke

8:00 P.M. *By Faith Moses: The Highlights Of A Great Career (Heb. 11)* – Eric Owens

Wednesday

9:00 A.M. *Nephews & New Fire*
Caleb Campbell

10:00 A.M. *Here Am I: Answering The Call To Lead God's People*
Bobby Liddell

11:00 A.M. *And He Began To Make Excuse – But, Behold, They Will Not Believe Me*
Kevin Beard

1:00 P.M. *Face To Face, Friend To Friend*
Mike Vestal

2:00 P.M. *But We Are Moses' Disciples: The Foolishness Of Following Moses & His Law After The Coming Of Christ & His Law*
Tim Burroughs

2:00 P.M. (Ladies Class) *Teaching Your Children To Love One Another*
Melony Webster

7:00 P.M. *When A Nation Throws Away Its Future: Unwanted Babies And A Nation's Demise*
Eric Lyons

8:00 P.M. *Handling The Hard Causes*
Tommy J. Hicks

Thursday

9:00 A.M. *Then Sang Moses*
Tom Wacaster

10:00 A.M. *Standing On Holy Ground*
Bobby O'dell

11:00 A.M. *And He Began To Make Excuse – O My Lord, I Am Not Eloquent*
Jason Hilburn

1:00 P.M. *May It Be Said Of Me: The Servant Of The Lord*
Dwayne Butler

2:00 P.M. *May It Be Said Of Me: The Man Of God*
Chris Butler

2:00 P.M. *(Ladies Class) Redeeming The Time Because The Days Are Evil*
April Meacham

7:00 P.M. *What Moses Saw From Mount Nebo*
Tom Holland

8:00 P.M. *My Servant Moses Is Not So, Who Is Faithful In All Mine House*
Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

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POWER

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Wade Webster, Editor

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an important truth about unity. Mark records:

> *"And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end (Mk. 3:23-26)."*

Please note the simple peril that Jesus portrayed. A house that is divided against itself simply cannot stand. Although Jesus was not specifically talking about the church, the principle that He gave holds true. United we stand, divided we fall. As you know, inspired writers often described the church as a house. To Timothy, his own son in the faith, Paul wrote,

> *"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15; cf. Eph. 2:19; Isa. 2:2-3)."*

Please notice that the church of the living God is the house of God. If a house divided against itself cannot stand, and the church is a house, then what does division do to the church? Clearly, it will cause it to fall.

Today, we need to consider again the peril that Christ portrayed. If we will do so, then it will help us to keep the unity of the Spirit.

In the simplest way that I know how, I have laid out three reasons why we should endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit. We should labor to keep the unity of the Spirit because of the prayer that Christ prayed, because of the price that Christ paid, and because of the peril that Christ portrayed.

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i James Strong. **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible: Greek Dictionary of the New Testament.** Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, p. 66, #4704.

ii Strong's, p. 71, 5083

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