



against each of these things, and remember that only by abiding in His Word can we truly be called His disciples (cf. 2 Tim. 4:2-4; Matt. 10:34-37; Jas. 4:12; 2 Jn. 9).

en it upon themselves to teach things not found in the Scripture, but nevertheless give those teachings the same weight as Scripture. We mustn't allow ourselves to be caught in this same trap (cf. Matt. 15:9). The source of these additions can come from anywhere: preachers, family, friends, creed books, or human religious guides. Let us heed God's warnings

Brethren, let us wholly rely upon the Word of God to be our guide, and resolve to study it diligently so that we will not fall into the same traps of division and confusion that plagues the rest of the religious world. We must let go of preconceived notions and self-will as we look to God's Word. If we fail to read, study, and discuss it objectively, then we may also end up following our own hearts (cf. Jer. 10:23; Pro. 14:12). God is not to blame for all the varied religious teachings in the world, it is man's doing. We cannot allow anyone to cause us to think otherwise, for our **"God is not a God of confusion, but of peace"** (1 Cor. 14:33). And His church is one that is *united* in love, doctrine, and purpose (Phil 2:1; Eph. 4:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:8).



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ISSUE

13.49

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

December 4
2011

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Jason Garcia



Confusion and Division

By Jason Garcia

What is one of the most common reasons people do not seek out spiritual truth? We could answer any number of ways: laziness, disinterest, denial, or indifference. All of these dwell within a person, but one reason often cited is the sheer amount of religious groups and churches in the world that lead to confusion and effectively deter many folks from ever starting to look. Those folks are still without excuse, and even if there were more divisions than there are now, each of us would still be expected to find the truth. So why is there so much confusion and division in the world today? Has it always been this way or is it something that has evolved over time? Even though none of them agree on all points, could they all still be "right in their own way" (as some people say)? In answering these questions we can dispel many fallacies people may have when pointing to a cause for all the confusion and division we see in the religious world.

Some religious folks would dismiss this issue by teaching that God actually approves of division among His people. They would see no merit in the following discussion at all because (in

their mind) God isn't really so concerned with the details as much as He is the "big picture". So, they argue, since the details don't matter to God, then they shouldn't matter to men and, thus, God is either indifferent to division or else approves of it and works in it. Unfortunately for them, no such teaching can be found anywhere in God's Word. It is quite the opposite in fact. The Lord's apostles rebuked division among the earliest local churches, and ad-



Olsen Park church of Christ

monished their brethren to unite. Paul says, **"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment"** (1 Cor. 1:10 NASB). This echoes the teaching of the Lord Himself while He was on the earth, for He prayed that all His followers would be one just as He and the Father are One (cf. Jn. 17:20-21). Of this we can be sure: God teaches against division among His people, and we cannot allow ourselves to think otherwise.

Any attempts to place the blame squarely on God or His Word will come up short every time. One might say, "If God would simply reveal His Will clearly and unambiguously, then we should all get on just fine". In this person's mind, God is the culprit and *His* lack of clarity is to blame. Fortunately, God has done just the opposite. If religious people are divided, the unavailability of God's Will is *not* to blame. In His Scripture we find all things we need that pertain to life and godliness (cf. 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16). Many folks get hung up what is not revealed in the Word of God because it doesn't tell them what they *want* to know. However, this was never its purpose as the above passages teach us for He has given us everything we *need* to know. Since God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways higher than our ways then, naturally, there will be some things contained in His Word that are difficult to understand (2 Pet. 3:16; Is. 55:8-9). We should be quick to point, however, that "difficult" is a world away from "impossible". The men who were inspired by God to teach His people and give them His Word expected their audience to understand what they were reading (Eph. 3:4). One may argue that Paul is strictly speaking about

the mystery of Christ in the previous passage, but isn't this what the entirety of Scripture is about? Yes, the redemptive work that God set about doing through His Son from the foundation of the world to reconcile man back to Himself (1 Pet. 1:10-12; Rev. 13:8; Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4-5). Whatever the cause of religious division, we can be certain that it is not due to God's Will being incomplete, unrevealed, or ambiguous.

Still, even if someone agrees with everything we've looked at so far, they may still argue that God's Word contains inconsistencies and contradictions. Thus, even if it is complete we can never hope to make sense of the Scriptures because (as they say) they are mangled with internal errors. Again, this simply is not true. Of the hundreds of supposed contradictions skeptics have put forth over the years, not one has ever proved to be remotely legitimate. The fact is that God's Word is absolute truth, and truth will never contradict itself. The Psalmist states this principle explicitly when he says, **"The sum of Your Word is Truth"** (Psalm 119:160). Contrary to what unbelievers may say, the Holy Spirit does not mince words and His teaching is simple: If God's Word is viewed comprehensively, then one will know truth and *not* contradiction and inconsistency. If there is confusion among the religious, it is not due to a flawed revelation from God.

Where do we place the blame, then, when division occurs? We need look nowhere but to ourselves. God said long ago through His prophet, **"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"** (Hos. 4:6). Paul

will affirm by the same Spirit that there are those who **"have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge"** (Rom. 10:2). The truth is some people don't have the desire to learn God's truth, so they "follow their own heart", and separate themselves from God and His people. There may be the minority who are simply ignorant and have never heard the name of Jesus at all and so they live their own way. Still, others may have the desire to learn, but have mishandled the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15). All of these circumstances can lead to division and confusion, but the fundamental problem within them all is a lack of knowledge. Others, in an attempt to simplify doctrine, have effectively and unlawfully *added* teachings to what God has already revealed (Re 22:18-19). This also leads to confusion and division because some have tak-