

The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

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ARE WE DOOMED TO DIVIDE OVER EVERY DIFFERENCE?

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I have heard this question raised in a variety of contexts. In one case this is asked when discussing differences over marriage, divorce and remarriage. Some, who grant extra occasions for divorce other than just fornication, ask this when brethren refuse to fellowship their doctrinal error. The question, when used in this context, seems to imply that we who refuse to fellowship differences in doctrine in this topic are actually making a lot of fuss about nothing. But are we?

Sometimes questions like this one are used to imply things that are not necessarily true. For example, if we were discussing division over the purpose of baptism, and you affirmed that baptism is for the remission of sins; I could ask you: "Are we doomed to divide over every difference?" The answer to this question **by itself** is obviously "no". But in the context of differing over the purpose of baptism, the answer would actually be yes; for any purpose other than what God has revealed is an unauthorized purpose.

Thus, a simple question can be used in a context that makes the simple answer incorrect. And, if you do not answer with a simple "no", some would paint you as one who believes that all differences must be divided over. It is like the question, "Have you stopped beating your wife yet?" The question assumes too much.

Denominations have been using this tactic for a very long time. They obviously do not think that every issue divides, in fact, they think that very few issues should be divided over. And when we try to point out that there is a Bible pattern

to hold to regarding what to do to be saved, the organization of the church, etc.; they assert that we are "majoring in minors and minoring in majors". In other words, they are saying that our views are all backwards and we are the source of division.

In reality it is the denominations that are creating walls & barriers with their different doctrines and different plans of salvation and different Christs. And they frown upon those who would call an end to their divisive & sectarian practices. They assert that we are narrow-minded, legalistic, troublesome, etc. Sadly, some brethren today are thinking along similar lines. But even so, let us address the question: "Should we divide over every difference?" Where is the line to be drawn?

In God's word we find that differences arose frequently among the Lord's people. You will not have to read very far to find differences over circumcision, differences over eating meats, differences over fellowship with Gentiles, differences over doctrines, etc. But, unlike today's careless attitudes that extend fellowship in spite of doctrinal differences, the Holy Spirit reveals that we are to take a stand on revealed Truth.

God has revealed an unchangeable standard (2 Pet. 1:22-25; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3). It is a standard that will be used to judge all people (John 12:48). Therefore, when it comes to matters that are in this category, we must "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13) and "learn not to go beyond the things which are written" (1 Cor. 4:6). To deviate, to add to or take away from, what God has revealed is to commit sin (Rev. 22:18-19; 2 John 9; 1 John 3:4).

Some of what God says is very specific. For example, God reveals that we are to believe, repent, and be baptized for the remission of our sins (Mark. 16:16; Acts 2:38). Therefore there is no other method of becoming saved that will be acceptable to God. But, God has not specified whether we must be baptized in a river, a pool, a baptistery, etc. As long as we fulfill the definition of the word baptism ("immersion") for the purpose God revealed ("for remission of sins") then the unregulated particulars of where to be immersed is left up to our discretion.

If someone wanted to change the doctrine of God, we could not yield (Gal. 2:4-5). But within what God has revealed there are some things where we may differ and it does not matter (Rom. 14). Thus, while **some** differences require us to divide in order for us to "hold the pattern of sound words", there are yet **some** differences over which we should not divide.

Consider further the example of giving. God has given **command** to the churches that we should give on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-3). Therefore, if I decided to **not** do this, I would be violating God's word. But does God anywhere say how many times we must give on the first day of the week? Obviously we must give at least once in order to fulfill the command. But could I give twice? Could I give 3 times? If I gave four times, have I fulfilled the command or violated it? I have certainly **not** violated it, but **fulfilled and obeyed** it.

Therefore we see again that God's commands require of us some things, while at the same time allowing us options in other things. As long as we carry out the command and do not violate it, then we are walking within the boundaries of what God has revealed.

So, the question of "Does every difference require division?" is answered: "No, we do not need to divide over every difference because not all differences violate the revealed Truth. But **some** differences do violate truth, and we cannot fellowship sin." The solution to each particular issue is to find out what God says about the

matter. If it is a matter of revealed truth then we cannot compromise. If it is in the realm of permissible opinion or authorized liberty, then we should not divide over it. So, like those in Acts 15, we should be careful to require only those things which are truly necessary before God (Acts 15:28).

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Sawyer Sims, Jean Gambrell, Johanna Fletcher, Othena Kinnard, Wesley Geer, Mag Bumbalough, Mary Cox, Monie Petty, Dave Poteet & Marilyn Poteet-Langford (NHC 230), Robert & Betty England, Joe Smith, Thelma Klein, Nathan Hill, DeLeesa Price, Michelle Austin, Lydia Poe, Larry Bumbalough, Jake Hale, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Ed & Carolyn Williams, Kenley Streeval. Matthew Taylor (leukemia), Joyce Simmons Wagner.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **Home Bible Study** - Sat. Oct. 27th.
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month.
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. Oct. 28th.
- **GM** - Ron Daly, April 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

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<http://frontiernet.net/~nscoc>
nscoc@frontiernet.net

North Sparta church of Christ

359 North Spring St.
Sparta TN 38583
(931) 836-3321

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Speaking As The Oracles Of God (1 Pet. 4:11)