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THE SURE WORD By Jonnie Hutchison

THE STANDARD OF RELIGIOUS UNITY

In the New Testament we read about the promise of Jesus to build His church (Matthew 16:18-19). Never in the entirety of Jesus' teaching did He ever speak of building many different kinds of churches. Jesus promised, "I will build My church..." (Singular). Although the New Testament speaks of churches in the plural in relation to location (Acts 15:41; Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:19), it does not speak of different kinds of churches each acceptable to God.

The New Testament condemns religious division. When Christians in Corinth exhibited an attitude of divisiveness, Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, addressed the issue in the words, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). It should be obvious that religious division will not exist where people are willing to speak the same thing and be of the same mind and judgment. It is equally as obvious that all the different "kinds of churches" are not speaking the same thing nor are they of the same mind and judgment. The result is division.

How is it possible then to have religious unity? The only way is to return to the Bible as the only standard of religious authority. This requires giving up the religious teaching that has originated in the minds of men including all denominational creeds, confessions of faith, and catechisms. The cure for religious division is not agreeing to disagree, but in speaking the same thing and being perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment. The Bible teaches, "Let God be true, and every man a liar..." (Romans 3:4). Should we not strive to fulfill the prayer of our Lord, "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:21).

The plea of faithful churches of Christ is to give up the doctrines and commandments of men and unite upon the one and only infallible divine standard which is the written Word of God. The fact is that we can understand the Bible and understand it alike (John 8:32; Ephesians 3:4; 5:17). The problem often is not a failure to understand God's Word but a refusal to believe and obey what it teaches. Friends, the Bible is right. Any teaching that contradicts the Bible is false teaching (Read Acts 17:11).