

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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February 24, 2019

“The Need For Consistency in Religion”

By Brian Meade

We live in a world where people will fight and argue for their right to be different. Diversity is often celebrated as a good thing in a lot of areas of life (and it can be). But when it comes to the religion of our Lord—having many different kinds of doctrines, worship styles, and faiths is not only confusing, it is sinful. It is often that churches will celebrate their own different way of doing things, as being more modern and with the times.

But is that what God wants? Does every church have a right to believe and practice things that are conflicting or contradictory? Paul told the church at Corinth, “*For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.*” (1 Corinthians 4:13)

Paul was consistent in teaching the same way, in every church. He did not preach one way to one church and a different way to another church. Based on what Paul did in his day, we should be able to walk into any meeting house, in any place where people assemble to worship God and see the same doctrines preached and the same actions taking place in worship that you read about in the New Testament. That is what being consistent to a standard of truth is all about—and is one of our the greatest needs today!

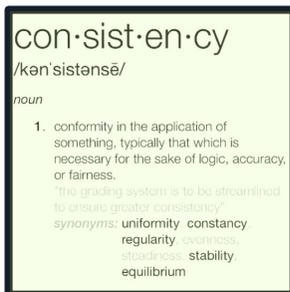
1. Consistency is Needed For Doctrinal Truth.

Truth simply cannot be truth, if it is not in agreement or has contradictory elements that disqualify it. Men are divided on the Godhead: is it one or three persons? (see Matthew 28:19) Whether we still have spiritual gifts or not today? (see 1 Corinthians 13:8-13) Whether baptism saves us or not? (see Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21) Whether the Lord’s supper should be observed weekly, monthly, or yearly? (see Acts 20:7) Is the nature of the church a denomination, or non-denominational? (see Ephesians 4:4) Was Jesus born of a virgin, or not? We cannot have it both ways—we must determine from the scriptures what God wants. Consistency is rare in the religious world—that often has many errors and is why men are hopelessly divided. Someone once said, “*Consistency is a rare jewel indeed.*”

But the church that Jesus built was founded upon His truth (Matthew 7:24-27; Matthew 16:16-18), not the opinions, creeds, and doctrines of men!

We must abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11), and not deviate from true and proper doctrine. Notice how the early Christians dealt with doctrinal issues:

(1) In Acts 15:1-30, when “*Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”*”(Acts 15:1)— Paul did not allow that teaching to go unchallenged (verse 2), but even got the apostles involved from Jerusalem (verses 3-6) to help settle the matter.



They determined that, *“Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, it seemed good to us, having become of one mind,...”* (Acts 15:24-25) Once they determined the truth— that circumcision was not necessary for salvation at all— they were *“of one mind....”*

(2) In I Corinthians 15:1-58, Paul dealt with the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, as he said, *“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”* (1 Corinthians 15:12) In all of his discourse, it was obvious that a bodily resurrection was the only right and proper belief (1 Corinthians 15:13-20).

2. Consistency is Needed For Proper Worship.

Jesus was discussing proper worship, when He said to woman of Samaria, *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* (John 4:23-24) From these passages, Jesus teaches us that there is worship in spirit and truth, and by implication there is worship without spirit and truth.

We see much today in the religious world that is not done in truth, and is thus, not consistent with God’s will. When men add instruments of music to worship, add choirs and solos to delight and entertain masses of audiences— they do so in error. Worship is prescribed by God alone. God’s word teaches us that worship in truth is prayer (James 5:16), singing (vocal music), giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2), the Lord’s supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), and preaching (Acts 20:7-8). It is simply amazing how we all can have different backgrounds, diverse ethnicities, and cultural distinctions and still we all worship the same Bible way! We all honor God by following worship His way, not our own.

3. Consistency is Needed To Distinguish Truth From Error.

The major problem of unity in diversity is the unwillingness of those who hold this view to pronounce contradictory views as heresy. Even when men strongly disagree with teaching they would label as false, they try to avoid at all costs calling such as error, and thus sinful. Therefore, unity in diversity allows false teaching to be tolerated— something God does not allow.

Notice the attitude that Paul has toward error in Romans 16:17-18, *“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.”* We are often mocked and chided for being so close minded to other beliefs, but the same could be said for the Paul, Jesus, Peter, and John the beloved— who all stood up to error.

The only way to determine right from wrong and truth from error is to follow closely to the pattern and examples we find in the New Testament (Philippians 3:16; Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11). And if distinctions were made back in the 1st century, we can make those same distinctions today in the 21st century.

4. Consistency is Needed For True Unity

Jesus prayed in John 17:20-21, *“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”*

The ONLY WAY that true unity and oneness is realized when we are consistent in ALL of our WAYS: Doctrine, worship, organization, and work. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:10, *“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.”*

5. How To Achieve Consistency in Religion.

Practically speaking, it can only achieved by sacrifices and a total commitment to truth. We must give up any self-willed preferences and speak only from the oracles of God. Understand that God’s silence is not permission to act, BUT PROHIBITIVE (Hebrews 7:13-14). And call Bible things by Bible names. In conclusion, we will use an old writing from days past:

“Would to God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgot; that we might all agree to sit down together as humble, loving disciples at the feet of a common Master; to hear his word, to imbibe his Spirit, and to transcribe his life into our own.” (“Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons," Volume V, page 60.)

That was a quote that N.B. Hardeman used in his Tabernacle sermons, but is not quoting a member of the church, but John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church. We agree with his sentiment, yet long for the application!

GOSPEL Allen Shepherd **MEETING** Sunday April 21st Monday-Friday 22nd-26th 7:00 PM Nightly

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry's niece), Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Pam Zeanah, Katie Ward Cobern (cancer)
The family of Mary Bynum (who passed away Wednesday the 20th
Remember Sherry Johnson, who is recovering from surgery.
Robbie Doles is home recuperating from some painful back spasms.

The Ladies Bible class will be this Thursday the 28th. (It was postponed due to the weather)

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Paul Johnson
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #1: "The Names For God"

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Fred Johnson
The Book of John (Mike Willis)
Page 95, Question #19

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Jerry Kennemur
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Tim Harris Jr.
Psalm 115:9-16
Song Leader: Dan Cottrell
Lord's Table: Fred Johnson
Assisting: Lee Busby & Brian Meade
Singing Service: Men of the Congregation Lead Singing
Invitation: Fred Johnson
Closing Prayer: Nathan Meade

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

February 27th:

Auditorium Bible Class: Paul Johnson
1 & 2 Chronicles (Mike Willis)
Page 65, Question #1
Invitation: Chris Callahan
Song Leader: Dan Cottrell
Closing Prayer: Tim Harris Sr.