

***Sabbath School Today***  
**With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

***Oneness in Christ***

**Lesson 5: The Experience of Unity in the Early Church**

During this quarter, millions of Christians around the world are giving special study to unity within the church. We're studying what the Bible speaks of as unity within the church. Christ prayed for it (John 17:20, 21). Paul said that Christ's *agape* will produce it (Eph. 4:13-16). The very doctrine of God demands it (vss. 2-6). But we have to face reality: churches often have disagreements and divisions, even within one denomination and even within one church body.

In a church that has for 150 years stood for creation in 6 days, a literal reading of Genesis 1, 2, etc., there are now powerful voices advocating evolution. And there are divisions about women's ordination, about music in church worship services, etc. And for many, "the blessed hope" of the soon second coming of Christ is receding into the background, and a materialistic earthly millennium is taking its place.

Why does disunion seem to flourish so? And how can the church enlighten the earth with glory if it is in a divided state? And what can bring the true unity Christ prayed for? There *is a solution*.

If God is real and if His Bible is true, it follows that God has a solution for the problem of disunity.

*God will bring His people into unity.* That which to doubters today seems impossible, the Holy Spirit will accomplish.

He brought the disunited eleven apostles into unity before the Day of Pentecost. They were "with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). That was "the former rain," and the "latter rain" is promised to be even greater.

God cannot use force to accomplish it. For Him to burn down the churches or strike them with lightning, wouldn't solve the root problem.

Ephesians tells us the solution: for those "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine," is the message of *agape* (4:14, 15). Such a message is the objective gospel, the message of what Christ accomplished, the pure biblical truth of justification by faith.

Christ has promised solemnly that if He is lifted up on His cross, that is, if His *agape* is clearly proclaimed, He "will draw all men unto [Himself]," and that of course is perfect unity (John 12:32). Let the leadership of a church that is being fragmented receive that

most precious message of Christ's righteousness; the miracle of unity will be as certain as day follows night.

"Pentecost" is a big word to Christian people. It came 50 days after Christ's resurrection. The disciples met together to pray and study for 10 days previous, so that by the time that the Day of Pentecost arrived, they were finally in total harmony and unity, "in one accord" (Acts 2:1). May the Lord hasten the day when His modern "apostles" will finally be in "one accord" in their understanding of the truth of the gospel!

A great blessing came on that day. The true and genuine "gift of tongues" was manifest so that everyone from all parts of the world who were gathered in Jerusalem heard the glad tidings in his own language so he could clearly understand it. The Holy Spirit was given in a fullness that has never since been equaled.

What was it about the message of Pentecost that had such tremendous power that 3000 were converted, truly converted, in a day?

Was it something that even Paul did not as clearly articulate? Ellen G. White has said, "Great truths that have lain unheeded and unseen since the day of Pentecost, are to shine from God's word in their native purity" (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 473; 1897).

Is there a "great truth" that shone clearly on the Day of Pentecost that even the apostle Paul did not preach? Yes, there is one: Speaking to that great crowd of thousands of people from many nations and languages, Peter boldly declared that *they* had crucified the Son of God: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). A few days later he told them, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, ... and killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:14, 15). Nothing in Paul's epistles is quite so strong, so directly confrontational!

What happened on the day of Pentecost? A repentance deeper than has ever been known. The murder of the Son of God is the greatest sin ever committed; repentance for that sin is the greatest a human heart can ever know. Do you think it might be possible that Peter's sermon applies to us today?

—Paul E. Penno

**Notes:**

Pastor Paul Penno's video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/wA2bML8eDKU>

You may subscribe to the e-mail version of *Sabbath School Today* by sending a request to [sabbathschooltoday@1888message.org](mailto:sabbathschooltoday@1888message.org)