

Of One Heart and Soul

by J. Frank Norris

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a church of one heart and soul, united in our beliefs, witnessing for Jesus Christ, and giving to the common treasury.

Scripture: Isaiah 6:8, Malachi 3:10, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:48, Acts 4:32, Romans 15:5, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 2:2, Colossians 3:14

Topics: "Church Unity", "Evangelism"

Description

J. Frank Norris preaches about the unity and power of believers in the early church, emphasizing the importance of being of one heart and one soul in faith, testimony, and giving. He urges the congregation to focus on witnessing for Jesus Christ with holy boldness, trusting in God's presence and power to guide and protect them. Norris highlights the simplicity of the New Testament method of spreading the Gospel through believers coming together in unity, giving their all to God, and sharing the message of salvation with everyone they encounter.

Transcript

Prayer: Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, of ever thou hast formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. We confess our helplessness this morning. There is no good thing within us. Our strength is all weakness. Our wisdom is foolishness. But we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.

And as little children that come to their fathers and mothers, we come unto thee today, for thou hast said, "How much more shall you heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

Breathe upon this great audience thine own self, and may this be a bethel to the lives of all that come here today. It is not too much to ask of thee that those who shall come receive life everlasting.

We give grateful thanks for thy manifold blessings to those who hear the gospel; to God be all the glory. And may salvation come to many today, here and at the tabernacle this afternoon and evening.

O Lord, revive thy work in our midst, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy. Our land is in turmoil, the world is in an awful storm. But our Saviour is on board. He can guide in the storm.

Lord, help us today to resign ourselves to thy holy will as never before, and as clay in the potter's hand to be molded, to be used. And when the battle is over, and our tired bodies crumble to dust, and our spirits

go where the spirit of just men are made perfect, one look - one look - on the face of our Lord will be glory enough.

Bless the strangers within our gates, hearts that are broken, souls that are heavy with sorrow - help us all to put our hands in the mighty hand of God.

We ask for Christ's sake. Amen.

DR. NORRIS: For our meditation this morning a thousand texts and themes crowd to my mind, but that the hour may be most profitable, may we forget where we are, and forget who is speaking, and just remember this one word - and I am going to do an unusual thing - I usually read a whole chapter, but for emphasis I want this one verse to ring in our souls:

Acts 4:32, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."

Strange, and yet glorious, have been our experiences. We put our faith in the same God who has led us as the good and tender shepherd thus far. We look upon the future without any fear. We look upon the unknown days ahead of us with perfect confidence in Him who has said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

What joy, what fellowship, what sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus - forgetting the things that are behind, we are looking forward to a greater day.

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."

This is God's verdict concerning a great church. Pentecost is behind. A great revival is on, and daily such as were saved were being added to the church - multitudes of them - multitudes could be three thousand or five thousand -: And daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" - "And they went everywhere preaching the Word" of God - and they went "From house to house."

Talk about difficulties, Jerusalem was to be a Christian.

The Founder of this faith had died as a criminal, between two criminals. The disciples were despised; all their property was confiscated; some of them were put in prison. But unheeding their hate, and without any organization and any great wealth, without flag or navy or army, a handful of men and women turned the world upside down.

Let's inquire now as to why this message to you - "And the multitude of them that believed were of one soul and of one heart."

First of all, notice there was a multitude - "multitude of believers," and nothing is said about even who was pastor of that church.

And if you please, there is not much said about deacons - I am not sure as to whether the seven in the sixth chapter of Acts were deacons - rather doubt it. I know they were not the modern "Board of Deacons," because that seven went out winning souls. They didn't sit in judgment of the church.

Excuse me, but there is nothing said about even the Ladies Aid Society.

And they don't say anything about the choir.

They don't say anything about any organization.

Let's get right back to the simple New Testament method - "And the multitude of them that believed." May God help us to see that! That is all - "of one soul and one heart" - "The multitude of them that believed."

Now they were one in several respects:

First, they were one in their belief. The word "believe" here means that they were saved - "As many as gladly received the Word."

One in their religious belief.

One in the family of Jesus Christ.

One in that they recognized God as their Father.

One in their belief in Him who has power to forgive sins.

One in that they recognized the Holy Spirit as their only Administrator.

One in the same body, the church.

One as they had stood in the baptismal waters together, buried in the likeness of His death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection.

One as they did eat and break bread around the table of our Lord.

One as they gave their testimony, for the next verse says "And with great power gave the apostles witness" - Or testimony - of what? Of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and "great grace was upon them all."

And just before that we read, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness."

I want to lay on your hearts this morning this thought - if we can have a hundred active personal workers why not five hundred? The wisest, happiest, simplest thing in the world is to witness for Jesus Christ, provided one thing is true - if you know Him. And if you do know Him you will be like the blind man after he had received his sight - when they gathered around him he said,

"I don't know but one thing, whereas I was blind, now I see." And they couldn't deny it.

In the same chapter where this text is taken from we hear from the "Council." Here is where modern Councils got started.

"And the 'Council' conferred among themselves."

They said, "Here, this thing is going a little too fast. This church is growing too fast."

And the Council said, "That indeed a notable miracle hath been done, no man can deny." And then their "Council" Said, "We will call these men together before us and we will threaten these men, and we will charge them not to talk any more in the name of Jesus Christ."

And they called them before them, but Peter stood up before them and said, "Is it right to obey God or to obey you?"

HOLY BOLDNESS

Do you know what we need right now in evangelizing this city and the world? We need that same holy boldness that laughed at difficulties and smiled at the impossible and defied the powers of darkness and ecclesiastical conspiracies and say "We will witness for Jesus Christ." Now when we learn this - I am talking to myself this morning - when will we ever learn, beloved, that God is waiting for a church and a people who will do just one thing, and the only thing He will bless, and that is witness for Jesus Christ? And that is all He promised to bless!

I spoke to a great crowd of preachers the other day, and one brother was talking about how to have a revival. I said, "Begin under your own hat." We think we have got to have a lot of organization, a lot of machinery, but we need God, first and last, and then we have a revival. The man who has just been born again and just been baptized as a rule will make a better soul-winner than a man who has been in the church forty years, if he hasn't learned to do it there is not much chance now - they have got to be un-made.

"And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night" - in the night - "by a vision" - and here is what God told Paul - "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee" - Why? "for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months. Teaching the word of God among them."

How to win a city? God says, "There is only one thing I want you to do, 'But speak.' I don't want you to go out here and prove there is a God. I don't want you to go out here and prove Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I want you to do what that woman did when she left her water pot and flew up the sides of Mount Gerizim and shouted to everybody, all her neighbors, 'Come and see!'"

That is all - "And we are witnesses of these things." God says when you do that He will be there.

"But Lord, here are a lot of infidels!"

"I will be there. You tell what I have told you."

"And they were of one heart and one soul" in giving their testimony for Jesus Christ,

The prophesied One,

The promised One,

The crucified One,

The risen One,

The ascended One,

The glorified One,

The exalted One,

And - the - Coming One!!

(Amen)

That is all - you tell - you go tell that today.

Tell it to the rich.

Tell it to the poor.

Tell it to the old man leaning on his staff.

Tell it to the young man ready to run his race.

Tell it in the sick room.

Tell it in the factory.

Tell it to the industrialist.

Tell it to the gamblers.

Tell it to the harlot.

Tell it to the saloonkeeper.

Tell it to the stenographer.

Tell it to the machinist.

Tell it to the engineer.

Tell it on the highways.

Tell it on the schoolground.

Tell it to the delivery boy.

Tell it over the telephone.

Tell it over the radio.

Tell it on the printed page.

As you go, tell it, preach it, proclaim it!

Let the educated tell it. They perceived they were unlearned men, but they also perceived that they had been with Jesus. Go home and tell what the Lord hath done for you.

What happened?

They "ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" and joy. They talked about Jesus, that is what happened. On God, give us men - give us men! Give us a church that will go all over this city and talk about Jesus! That is all - that is all.

Now one other word - "And they were of one heart and one soul" in bringing their offerings to the common treasury. You read in this same chapter where on the same occasion they brought their gifts, their money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet. Now that is Malachi 3:10 of the Old Testament.

"Bring" - Don't somebody send after it, but "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse" - that is the common treasury. If anybody ever goes out of here and says, "I want you to give some money because the church needs it," don't you do it. God isn't broke. He said, "Give" - here is why - in order that we may enter into partnership with God. Nine-tenths plus the blessing of God will go further than ten tenths without.

If you think you don't need God, wait till old age comes.

If you think you don't need God, wait until trials come, wait till the little white casket comes.

A young man, whom Mr. Vick knows quite well, said, "When I get this paid out and get that done, I am going to tithe." But at two o'clock one morning he called me and said, "My baby bot has just died." I went over there and the first thing this fine young man said - "Pastor, God took up a collection - God took up a collection." He said, "I knew I ought to do to." And he had tithed ever since.

Now this question, "And they were of one heart and one soul" - doing what? In bringing their gifts to the common treasury.

"Oh," you say, "I can't tithe, I have got a mother-in-law to support." Well, praise the Lord for mother-in-laws - the best way to get along with your mother-in-law is to get along with her. If you can't get along with your kinfolds, may the Lord have mercy on you. But don't try to support you mother-in-law with money that belongs to God.

So they brought their tithes into the common treasury. Now you believe, and I believe, that God's only institution for reaching the lost world it through the pillar and ground of the truth, which is the church. Everything on earth is against the church. The devil doesn't care what you do just so you despise the church of the living God. Money put into the common treasury of the church will go further for saving soul than through some mugwump, theoretical uplift society that you can't see, cant' take hold of and that you know nothing about.

What was God's method of reaching the lost world in New Testament times? What did they have? A great church at Jerusalem, another great church at Ephesus, another great church at Philippi, and another great church at Corinth, another great church at Rome - and I stop here and challenge you to find anything else. Where is their "Board"?

Where is their headquarters? Where is their hindquarters - where was it?

Alright then, let's come back to New Testament methods. God says,

"I want a group of believers." To do what? "And the multitude of them that believed" turned all Jerusalem upside down. Wouldn't it be a great thing if the multitude of them that believed were still stirring things up and turning the city upside down? It is wrong side up now.

I want to give you this word. Two great women were together a few days ago, working in a certain place and thy saw a woman sitting at a table drinking beer and smoking. They had never seen her before, and knew nothing about who she was, but she was a woman. And they said something seemed to tell them to

go and talk to her. And even though there were crowds going and coming they had the courage to go and talk to her.

What happened?

She burst into a flood of tears and said to these two Christian women, "I have no taste for beer, I care nothing for it, but I am in great trouble. My only son is behind the bars waiting for his trial, my husband is sick, and in my distress I was trying to drown my troubles."

And these two women talked to her about Christ. And she gave them the name of this don. And they told her about Temple Church and said, "You come to that church."

"Oh," said the woman surprised, "Is there a place like that?"

They were of one heart and one soul in giving themselves, their time, their money, their testimony - and that is why God blessed their testimony.

Who will say this morning, "Brother pastor, God is my witness, we will join as never before to bring our bodies, our time, our souls, our pocketbooks, put our all on the altar of Him who gave all for us?"

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