



“The Church Grows through Fellowship in Unity”

2 characteristics of the early church that all Christians must possess to fellowship in the unity of Christ’s saving work:

I. Genuine oneness that eradicates possessiveness—v.32

II. Powerful grace that eliminates neediness—vv.33-35

We will not be able to love our neighbors until we have relinquished and forgotten our love of self, so we must correct the vice of thinking too highly of ourselves. Furthermore, we must root out this inordinate desire for our personal advantage so that we will be able to endure the wrongs done to us. In short, where there is no love and devotion for our neighbors and no forgetfulness of self, there can be no godly love. The absence of love and devotion for our neighbors and the presence of self-interest are as incompatible with godly love as fire is incompatible with water. Therefore, whoever loves himself hates his neighbor. If he thinks highly of himself, he will not think highly of others, for he enhances himself and puts himself forward. If he is set on reaping his private advantage, he will necessarily be concerned only for himself as if he were the only one in the world. In short, a man who is carried away by self-love will have no compunctions about deceiving this man and robbing that one, speaking ill of one and slandering another, and doing all sorts of wicked and illicit things in order to get what he wants and accomplish his evil intentions. When that is our disposition, it is certain, no matter what fine appearance we present, there will be no more love in us than in a pack of dogs. Let us be aware then that after our Lord shows us that our hearts must be open toward our neighbors, he also wants each one of us to engage our hands fully in the task and to consider our ability to help our neighbors. When I say ‘our hands,’ I mean everything that God has give us with which we can help our neighbors. Let us not think about retaining for ourselves, as if it belonged to us, what God has given us to distribute to others. That is what Luke means when he says that none of the faithful thought anything was his own, but everyone considered everything to be held in common. Even those who had fields and possessions sold them so that those in need might be helped by having what they needed. (1)

Jer 32:38-40; Eph 4:4-6; Rom 12:9-13; 2 Thess 3:10-15; Gal 6:10;
2 Cor 5:14-15; Jn 15:12; Eph 4:32-5:2; 1 Jn 3:16-18; Jam 2:15-17