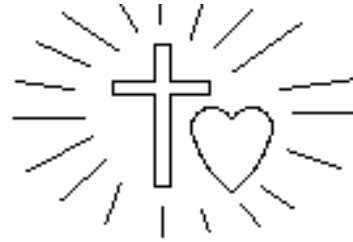


ADDoration Ministries



**God is SO GOOD; although I have ADD,
Attention Deficit Disorder**

ONE IN CHRIST -- MUCH DESIRED, BUT ELUSIVE

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What's your denomination? That has nothing to do with whether you are Christian. I really shouldn't have asked what denomination you are. Because you are probably curious, I share with you that I am United Methodist; however that doesn't matter. I equally consider you a brother, if you are Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Reformed, Baptist, Congregationalist, United Church of Christ, Assembly of God, Evangelical Free, or whatever. The only criterion is whether you believe that Jesus is your Savior and Lord.

We are all One in Christ. We all believe that Jesus willingly went to be crucified on the cross, to save us from our sins. Jesus loves us all. And Jesus has loved us since before we were born. Jesus loves us, regardless of where we each are on our spiritual journeys. Most of all, each of us is included in The Body of Christ.

Here is an interesting quotation. "If you are Christian --- regardless of your denomination, background, ethnicity, age, or gender ---- God is calling you to unity. He wants to be one with you - - and He wants us to be one with each other." -- Tommy Tenney
God's Dream Team: A call to Unity

Comedian Dick Gregory once said this. "I'm not into asms and isms. There isn't a Catholic moon and a Baptist sun. I know the universal God is universal. I feel that the same God force that is the mother and father of the Pope is also the mother and father of the loneliest wino on the planet."

Here is a quotation from John Wesley, whose followers started the Methodist denomination. The quotation: "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike. May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion."

John Wesley had his speaking style, but I paraphrase the quotation as, "Although we don't think alike, let's love alike, and let's be of one heart."

There are a number of scriptures that request that we be "One in Christ":

Romans 12:5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

Romans 15:5 May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus,

Galatians 3:28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are One in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:2 Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

1 John 3:23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

John 17:21-22 that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,

Notice that four out of six of those scriptures were from Paul, who previously had been a Pharisee and persecutor of Christians. After Paul's conversion, he very much promoted One in Christ. However much more so, Paul promoted that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile.

Here is the message I hope you get from this -- that differences in beliefs are relatively insignificant, compared to Christianity's real tenets. Nevertheless, genuine "One In Christ" is elusive. If your sentiment about differences is "I don't want to hear about them," then I say to you, "Congratulations," because that would mean that you are a veritable believer in "One in Christ."

Paul wrote to a young preacher, 2 Timothy 2:23, "Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels."

WHY ARE THERE DENOMINATIONS?

For about the first thousand years after Christ, there was just Roman Catholicism; however there was dissention even back then. During the fourth century, the Nicean Creed was written mainly for the purpose of settling a dispute that was bitter at that time. However the Nicean Creed turned out to be one of the causes of a rift that increasingly deepened, between the two factions centered in Constantinople and in Rome. In the year 1054, the Constantinople faction and the Rome faction mutually excommunicated each other, after several centuries of strained relations. Hence this was the start of the the Eastern Orthodox denominations. Near year 1500, Martin Luther came along at about the time that the Catholic abuses

were at their worst (especially the selling of indulgences). At the time of Martin Luther, the prevailing Catholic focus was on works to earn your salvation. Martin Luther especially focused on Paul's letter to the Romans, that spoke much about grace as a free gift from God. John Calvin came shortly after Martin Luther. Calvin raised a real divisive hornet's nest with his preaching about predestination. However, Calvin most of all was against trying to earn your salvation. Many people asked a good question with, "Why live a Christian life, if you are predestined?" After Calvin came such men as John Knox, Huldreich Zwingli, King Henry VIII, and John Wesley. Interestingly, John Wesley had no intention of starting a denomination. However the Methodist denomination really was started in America, by followers of John Wesley (such as Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke). Around 1900, Fundamentalism started because many Christians were alarmed by liberal trends in interpreting scripture. And Fundamentalists accuse mainline Christians of abandoning the word of God (whether true depends on where you are on your spiritual journey).

ARE DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES IMPOR- TANT?

Why do denominations persist? Among mainline Christian denominations, the beliefs are essentially the same. All the denominations believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The predestination division faded a long time ago, Praise God. Differences are partially caused by inertia. Organizational differences is one of the reasons that denominations persist. Some denominations have bishops, while others don't. Some denominations give local congregations more autonomy, to the extent that the local congregation hires the pastor. The organization above the local church is called varying names, such as diocese, synod, presbyter, and conference. The local church governing body is called the vestry by Episcopalians, the session by Presbyterians, and the administrative board by United Methodists.

Denominational differences are commonly exaggerated, in people's opinion. For instance denominations with local control commonly say, "We could never have a bishop appoint our pastor." In truth, a local United Methodist congregation has much to say about who gets appointed; however the district superintendent is in dialog with both the bishop and the local congregation, as for pastor selection. In total view, denominational differences are minor and peripheral.

Differences in baptism are also not all that important, speaking from my experience having been raised Baptist. Many centuries ago, the Roman Catholic Church somehow came to believe in doom to hell whenever a baby dies without baptism, consequently infant sprinkling became Catholic practice. Martin Luther maintained infant sprinkling, as did some other Reformation leaders. But Huldreich Zwingli vehemently believed that a person should be old enough to decide for himself about baptism. So Zwingli's followers

became the Anabaptists, who are the forerunners of the Amish and Mennonite denominations. As for the first Baptists, they included an English Calvinist named John Smyth, along with Roger Williams in Rhode Island. Yes, John Smyth and Roger Williams also believed that a person should be old enough to decide for himself about baptism -- plus they believed that baptism should be by immersion.

Within the United Methodist denomination, infant sprinkling is the norm, however they don't insist on that. John Wesley was an Anglican and maintained infant sprinkling. However the 1968 United Methodist merger absorbed the former EUB (Evangelical United Brethren) denomination. Some of the earliest EUB's were Zwingli followers, hence they were not inclined to baptize infants. The merger happened with the understanding that mode of baptism isn't important -- and belief in Jesus Christ is more important. United Methodists are also amenable to adult immersion baptism, although it would have to be done in another building, where there is a baptistry (or even a lake or swimming pool would do).

Because I was raised Baptist, I was immersion baptized at age 13. Now that I am United Methodist, I feel that my Baptist baptism was really equivalent to confirmation. Regardless of whether it was baptism or confirmation, the sacrament didn't mean much to me. The foremost reason for that sacrament was because my Sunday school class was being baptized. My spiritual birth came decades later at age 39. This is why I attach lesser importance to the sacraments of induction into the Body of Christ. By the way, Baptists also have dedication of infants, which is a sacrament without water.

EASTERN ORTHODOX DENOMINATIONS

As for the Eastern Orthodox denominations, the similarities with Western denominations are considerable. In Christ, there is no East and West. In fact, in 1965 The Pope and the Constantinople patriarch abolished the mutual excommunication of 1054, which is a very positive sign toward "One in Christ." Remember that Paul's epistles were to churches in Eastern Orthodox territory, except for Romans. Minor are such Eastern Orthodox characteristics as onion domed church buildings. As for the Eastern Orthodox cross, the shorter upper horizontal bar was for the sign indicating what charge Jesus was arrested for, and the lower slanted crossbar was because Jesus slumped to one side when his feet were nailed to the cross. As for that there are Orthodox denominations with varying national names, i.e., Greek, Armenian, Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, and Serbian, that is because denominational headquarters is in that nation. However there is little difference among those Orthodox denominations. In some cases, they were state religions centuries ago; however not so much today. The Greek Orthodox Church is still the state religion in Greece. Armenia was the first nation to have a state religion of Christianity. In the past, the czar was also the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. However today's Russia has separation of church and state. The Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian, Romanian, and Serbian Orthodox denominations have survived during decades of Communist regime. And the denominations in the Balkans

survived centuries of Muslim regime, when part of the Ottoman Empire.

PROTESTANTS AND ROMAN CATHOLICS -- ONE IN CHRIST

Protestants commonly scoff at the idea of an infallible Pope, by saying, "The Pope is a human being, hence he will make mistakes." This is an exaggerated denominational difference.

A Roman Catholic friend once explained it to me this way: "In casual conversation, yes, the Pope can make mistakes. However it is the Papal statements that are considered to be infallible. A Papal statement is an official communication about doctrine or practice. However the Pope always consults his advisors, before he issues a Papal statement. The quantity of advisors is such that a mistake would be unlikely, humanly speaking."

While on that sub-topic, differences between Protestants and Roman Catholics have diminished greatly, just during my lifetime. Vatican II during the early 1960's is one of the foremost movements toward Christian unity, during the twentieth century. Today, Catholics commonly participate in Ecumenical activities. In recent years, Catholics have vindicated Martin Luther. Today mainline Protestants and Catholics have essentially the same scriptural beliefs. However there remain some problems today.

Although marriages between Protestant and Catholic are more widely accepted today, they still are a problem to the elderly Catholics, who grew up long before Vatican II. There are cases where an elderly Catholic is bitter about that a grandchild married a Protestant.

Also the sacrament of Communion is divisive, when Catholic Communion is only open to Catholics. Today, the best that we can do toward "One in Christ" is for both sides to respect where the other side is coming from. Sadly, Communion is supposed to be the sacrament that unites all Christians. That saddens Catholics, as well as Protestants. As I have heard a Protestant say, "Communion is supposed to be the Lord's meal -- you wouldn't invite guests to dinner and then say, 'You can't eat the food.'"

Perhaps this will help you understand where Catholics are coming from on Communion; however bear in mind that I am Protestant. To Catholics, the bread is literally Christ's body, while the wine is literally Christ's blood. Therefore there is a substantial difference in spiritual meaning of Communion. Protestants typically consider the bread and wine (or grape juice) to be symbolic. If you think that Catholics ignore reality to say that it is literally the body and blood of Christ -- I understand where you are coming from. Believe it or not, many Catholics have experienced Jesus's physical presence at Communion services. So have some Protestants experienced that. Here is why Roman Catholics say that the elements are

literally Christ's body and blood -- the "consecration" procedure that is not part of a Protestant Communion service. Consecration is specific prayers and scriptures for the purpose of transforming the bread and wine into Christ's physical body and blood, and consecration is spoken by a priest. If that kind of consecration sounds like fantasy to you, I understand. Perhaps this physical presence of Christ is analogous to the Gospel of Luke story when two men were walking to Emmaus and didn't realize that the resurrected Jesus was walking with them -- and their eyes were opened when they broke bread with Jesus. Regardless of whether you are Catholic or Protestant, do not close your mind to the possibility of experiencing Jesus's physical presence. If you have never experienced Jesus's physical presence, Jesus still loves you -- especially in view of that your spiritual journey has not yet taken you there. For that reason, the typical Protestant church encourages you to believe that the Communion elements are symbolic. Saying that the elements are symbolic -- that is rejecting Christ, according to Roman Catholic belief. This makes it obvious that the best that Catholics and Protestants can do toward "One in Christ" is to respect where the other side is coming from, as for Communion.

A second reason for restricting Catholic Communion services is that a non-Catholic would not have been to a priest for confession; hence he would come into Communion with unconfessed sin. Oops, Catholics have renamed that sacrament "reconciliation." By the way, confession is a part of the liturgy in a typical Protestant Communion service.

Here is a problem I see. Whenever a Catholic priest announces at a mass that non-Catholics are requested to abstain from the Communion service, that automatically implies that non-Catholics are inferior. But the priest doesn't say that anybody is inferior. Catholic friends have shared with me that they don't believe that Protestants are inferior. However, it is impossible to request Communion non-participation without implying that non-Catholics are inferior. I can't think of any words to request non-participation without implying "God's love is conditional on Catholic status" or "Welcome to dinner; however you can't eat the food."

Regardless of denomination, people especially get legalistic about Communion. In my own United Methodist denomination, it is almost unthinkable to have a Communion service without first having a pastor consecrate the elements. Many people believe that any deviation from procedure would mean that the Communion table is being profaned.

I do believe that the year is coming (in God's timing) when a Pope will come along and sanction Catholic Communion that is open to all believers in Christ. It might not happen in my life time. That would be a tough sell to older Catholics. Eventually (during some century) a Pope will be more concerned about the divided Christianity, as for Communion.

I thank God that most mainline Protestant churches open their Communion to all believers in Christ. Protestants include all,

because you are a brother or sister in Christ, regardless of whether you have experienced Jesus's physical presence. More so, you are a brother or sister in Christ, regardless of where you are on your spiritual journey.

To a lesser degree, communion is divisive as for whether alcohol wine or grape juice is served. Because AA teaches that one drop of alcohol returns the alcoholic to destruction, alcohol wine excludes the recovering alcoholic. Some of them pass up the wine, but that means they cannot participate in the whole communion service (either that or be at a service that serves grape juice).

Briefly, Catholics and Protestants have a very similar belief in Jesus and God. By bearing that in mind, the Lord can help you overlook that you might not appreciate the emphases on certain concepts, the rosary, various saints, the Virgin Mary, Fatima, and garish churches. All of these are expressions of the same Jesus that you love. A Catholic family selling their home and putting a statue of Saint Joseph on their lawn -- if that helps them put their trust in the Lord, so be it.

As evidence of twentieth century progress toward unitedness between Catholics and Protestants, I bring up United States presidential elections. In the 1928 presidential election, Roman Catholic Al Smith ran for president against Herbert Hoover. There was a rumor that, if Al Smith were elected, the Vatican would be moved from Rome to Washington, DC. In the 1960 presidential election, John F. Kennedy was elected; although Roman Catholic.

HOMETOWN DIVISION, THAT I GREW UP WITH

You see that I was born in 1934. In my hometown, Fort Wayne, Indiana, youth were categorized by which school they went to, which was division. In Fort Wayne, there is a high quantity of Missouri Synod Lutherans, to the degree that there are Lutheran parochial schools. Also there are Roman Catholic parochial schools in Fort Wayne. I grew up Baptist and went to public school. Consequently, during the 1940's Fort Wayne youth were categorized as Catholic, Missouri Synod Lutheran, or other Protestant, according to which school. In Fort Wayne, there then was an English Lutheran church (which today is ELCA); however their youth were categorized as "other Protestant." In recent decades, some Christian schools have come to Fort Wayne. Christian schools generally are Fundamentalist alternatives to the secular humanism of public schools. Consequently, I wonder whether today Fort Wayne has a four way division among youth according to school: Fundamentalist, Catholic, Missouri Synod Lutheran, and other Protestant. Interestingly, today in Fort Wayne there are perhaps as many ELCA Lutheran churches, as there are Missouri Synod Lutheran churches.

ECUMENICAL TRENDS

The ecumenical movement is certainly praiseworthy toward One in Christ. Commonly, towns have ecumenical associations that include the Roman Catholics, mainline Protestants, and sometimes Jewish synagogues. The ecumenical associations generally combine worship services for special events and perhaps have charity activities for the less fortunate. A common conclusion within the ecumenical association is that the churches have far more in common, than differences.

During the past half-century, there has been a trend toward denominations combining. In 1957, the United Church of Christ was formed by combining the Congregational denomination with the Evangelical Reformed denomination. In 1968, the United Methodist denomination was formed by combining the Methodist and EUB (Evangelical United Brethren) denominations. As background to the United Methodist merger -- around 1800, the earliest United Brethren (Philip Otterbein's followers) had a very close association with such early Methodists as Francis Asbury. Today, there is some consideration being given to whether to bring the AME (African Methodist Episcopal) denomination into the United Methodist denomination, which certainly would be inter-racial. Somebody was telling me that in order for a AME United Methodist merger to happen, there would need to be healing from the decades when white churches excluded people of color. However there today already are some predominantly black United Methodist churches. In 1983, (PCUSA) Presbyterian Church USA was formed by combining several denominations that had "Presbyterian" in their names. However a remaining split today is that the PCA (Presbyterian Church of America) is more conservative than the PCUSA. Several Lutheran denominations have merged to form ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America). However Missouri Synod Lutherans and Wisconsin Synod Lutherans are still separate today; although all Lutherans are brothers in Christ.

However these denominational mergers have not totally succeeded. That shows that "One in Christ" is often elusive. Two Congregationalist friends have shared with me that some of them continue to have misgivings about about the United Church of Christ. One of them even made a statement to the effect that the United Church of Christ has diluted Congregationalism. Congregationalism was originally supposed to be that the local congregation governs the church, because John Calvin discarded bishops. The former Evangelical Reformed faction had their denominational general synod before the merger. Within the United Methodist denomination, some former EUB local churches persist in calling themselves EUB. This likely would displease both John Wesley and Philip Otterbein, the two respective denomination founders. I once visited a small Pennsylvania town and noticed in the phone book that there is both a United Methodist church and a United Evangelical Methodist church. The latter is probably a former EUB church.

THE MOST GLARING SPLIT TODAY

The most glaring split today in Christianity is between the fundamentalists and the more grace filled churches. First of all, I need to get this in -- where you are on your spiritual journey often determines whether you lean toward fundamentalism. It takes a heart conversion to get away from fundamentalism.

This split boils down to whether Christianity is a set of rules or a grace filled relationship with a Jesus of unconditional love. Fundamentalists are hyperfocused on making sure that their views are the so-called "right" views. Ironically, today's fundamentalists would disown the Jesus who associated with sinners, such as tax collectors and harlots. Fundamentalism is either-or, either you are saved or you are damned. Fundamentalism is all or nothing at all (there is no in between). This is rigidity about the set of rules, or else you will go to hell. I have heard of the split being described this way -- mainline churches say, "There ain't no hell," while Fundamentalists say, "The hell there ain't!!!"

Today's fundamentalism developed for reasons that certainly are understandable and they make sense. At about the 1900 turn of the century is when it began. During the latter 1800's, clergy and scholars increasingly were seeing the need to relax some of the paradigms, such as whether Jesus really walked on water. However that alarmed many Christians, who were asking whether the Bible is being abandoned. You and I can appreciate their concern. So the fundamentalist movement evolved for those reasons. The fundamentalists began to stress inerrancy of scripture.

Fundamentalist churches typically shun ecumenical associations. Sometimes the Fundamentalist churches say, "We associate with Christians only;" however they narrowly define the word "Christian" to mean only those who are of their mindset. They go on to quote certain Paul scriptures that advise "Don't associate with sinners." How about the Jesus who associated with tax collectors?

Fundamentalist churches typically focus on scriptures that are among their set of rules; however they ignore basic brotherhood scriptures. If Fundamentalists preach anything about grace and Jesus's unconditional love, that is mentioned much less frequently than their set of rules.

For example, women clergy are non-existent among Fundamentalists, because Paul wrote to the Corinthians and to Timothy that a woman shall not speak in church. At the theological seminaries of some mainline denominations, the students are half women today. Fundamentalists ignore Paul's writing to the Galatians that there shall no longer be male or female (along with no longer Jew or Greek). The prophet Joel wrote, "Your sons and daughters shall prophesize," and Peter quoted that at the first Pentecost.

I know of a Fundamentalist church that has a test for new members. The test is to make sure that the new member has the "right"

viewpoint on certain issues. That is intolerance along with controlling the church membership. Also this particular church requires that you give them a copy of your income tax return, so that they control members to force them to tithe. In that case, the tithe would be between you and a church board, instead of between you and God.

HOMOSEXUALITY ISSUE -- ESPECIALLY DIVISIVE

Especially visible is that Fundamentalists narrowly define the "right" position on such issues as abortion and homosexuality. If you don't conform to their hard-line total prohibition, then you are saying that abortion or homosexuality is all right. To them, the Bible clearly says that homosexuality is an abomination, as per Leviticus; however they probably ignore much of the remainder of Leviticus. To me, intolerance is an abomination too. Fundamentalists also argue that the Bible speaks of Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Some fundamentalists somewhat grant you that a homosexual is just as much entitled to God's salvation; however those people insist that upon conversion, a homosexual must repent from homosexuality. Therefore those people really are saying that God's love is conditional on repentance from homosexuality. Experts on the issue say this, "You might get a homosexual to behave like a heterosexual; however you will not cure their sexual orientation." If anybody is healed of homosexuality, perhaps that is analogous to the Alcoholics Anonymous member who has not had a drink in X number of years, but he/she biologically will always be an alcoholic.

The issue of homosexuality comes up because there is a category of humans who have been facing discrimination. Especially the church has discriminated against them. These people are outcasts in churches that are supposed to be loving and caring. In recent decades, scientists have found increasing evidence that sexual preference is biological and not behavioral. God created gays that way. You ask, "Am I saying that homosexuality is all right?" The answer to that question is why the issue is bitterly divisive among Christians. Opponents quote scripture that says, "Homosexuality is an abomination," without any if's nor but's -- case closed. Opponents don't consider that Jesus associated with outcasts, such as tax collectors and harlots.

If the homosexual has many lovers, there is agreement that promiscuity is promiscuity, regardless of whether it is homosexual or heterosexual.

The homosexuality issue especially threatens to divide the mainline Protestant denominations. Whether the church has any obligation to be politically correct causes division within the denomination. I know of a seminary student who transferred to another seminary (within the same denomination), because he learned that the one seminary says too much about political correctness. Some quote Paul's scripture, "Do not be conformed to this world," as against

being politically correct. The more liberal mainline Christians argue that God loves homosexuals too. And besides, a grace filled relationship is more important than your view on a narrow issue. However within liberal mainline denominations, many rank and file members are conservative on the homosexuality issue.

Ordination of gay clergy is an issue that has been bitterly debated within the denominations. My feeling is that a local church would lose members, if ever an openly gay pastor were appointed to the church. During 2003, the Episcopalian denomination risked causing a split when they approved an openly gay bishop -- in view of that many Episcopalians disapprove of homosexuality. But even more bitter is whether to sanction marriages between same gender (they call them "commitment ceremonies"). There are a considerable number of Christians, who have left mainline denominations, because of denomination's position about homosexuality -- and a few local congregations have pulled out too. The issue even threatens to cause whole states or regions to secede from the denomination (i.e., the entire mid-west or southeast). Before the Civil War, several denominations divided over slavery.

For a local church to pull out is financially gut wrenching. In the United Methodist denomination (and perhaps other denominations), the local congregation does not own the building -- the denominational conference owns it. If the congregation pulls out, would they be evicted from the building? And this could mean another building fund raiser. Also the pastor's pension would be an issue. If the pastor pulls out of the denomination, would he/she give up pension benefits?

My sense is that major denominations would do better to stay united by keeping the status quo -- maintain the prohibition against gay clergy and maintain that marriage is only between opposite gender couples. I confess that I would consider switching churches, if ever my local church hired an openly gay pastor. The issue is just too divisive today. Although my message to you is "One in Christ," I am in no position to address everything toward that goal. Today's church world is imperfect, especially in regard to "One in Christ."

I once heard a pastor say this in a sermon, "God is not so much concerned about sexual sins; however he is much more concerned about the sins of self-righteousness."

Let's now move off of the focus on homosexual issue.

A SET OF RULES IS FRUITLESS

To try conform to all the rules is really fruitless, because there is always one more sin to be conquered. Even if you do obey all the rules (hypothetically speaking), invariably a new sin creeps in of self-righteousness.

Most especially, there cannot be communication, whenever one side takes the position that only they are "right" while others are in darkness.

To bring the "set of rules" discussion to a close, Paul's epistle to the Galatians does much to advise an alternative. In Chuck Swindoll's book, The Grace Awakening, Chuck calls Galatians "our declaration of independence." Galatians 3 discusses the futility of depending on the law for your salvation. But Galatians 3:19-22 tells about the purpose of the law, which was Moses establishing guidelines. However Galatians 3:23-29 says that Christ came along to establish grace that is better than the law. I have mentioned Galatians 3:28 that says we are One in Christ. Galatians 4 describes the law as being slavery. Read especially Galatians 5. Galatians 5:2-6 says that the law obliges you to obey the entire law (not just selected portions), with consequence that the law causes you to fall out of grace. Galatians 5:13-26 tells of something better than the law. Let the spirit of love guide you, so that you want to live a good life that yields the "fruits of the spirit" of verses 22-23 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control). Galatians 5:13-26 certainly says that grace does not mean a hedonistic libertine life style.

To use Galatians to advance away from rules toward a grace filled spirit of love -- you won't accomplish that just by reading this. That would require a heart conversion. That would be advancing toward another stage in your spiritual journey. Jesus loves you, regardless of where you are on your spiritual journey. Jesus still loves you, if you have not yet sensed Paul's message to the Galatians. Through prayer and nurturing your spiritual relationship, this can happen. Whenever a person becomes wise to that it is impossible to adhere to all the legalistic rules, then he/she often becomes open to accepting faith in Jesus's grace for salvation.

WHY ADD'ERS ESPECIALLY OUGHT NOT BE CAUGHT UP IN DIVISIONS

For Attention Deficit Disorder persons, I have a real concern about divisions, because of their stimulation seeking tendencies. A challenging debate is very stimulating and causes the ADD'er to feel alive. However, it is detrimental to the mental health of the ADD'er. Especially, in view of 2 Timothy 2:23, this is true. I say this regardless of what the division is, whether it be fundamentalist versus mainline, Catholic versus Protestant, right-to-life versus pro-choice, gay versus straight, or inter-denominational.

LET'S SWITCH FROM DIVISIONS TO WHAT WE HAVE IN COMMON.

Paul was deeply concerned about divisions when he wrote Romans 14:1-14. Romans 14 advises you to not judge your brother who practices his religion differently. This Scripture refers to whether your brother adheres to Jewish dietary laws and whether he observes Jewish holy days. However Romans 14 is applicable to a wide assortment of today's issues that divide. Romans 14:5 can be paraphrased, "Let each person decide for himself." Romans 14:12 says that each of us is accountable to God -- and that is independent of anybody judging his brother. Divisions is a stumbling block, and Romans 14:13 says not to put a stumbling block in the path of your brother. To argue with an ADD person is often putting a stumbling block in his path. Romans 14:14 says that nothing is unclean in itself.

Ephesians 2:13-22 is a very good scripture about "One In Christ."

Ephesians 2:14 "For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us." Ephesians 2:18 "for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father."

What we all have in common, that is more important toward "One in Christ." The human condition is to focus on whatever divides. ADD people can be trained to switch focus. Let's switch our focus to what we have in common, so that our focus becomes "One in Christ."

What we have in common is our imperfections, but Jesus has saved us. Each of us is at a different stage in our spiritual journey. In some ways, we are each fallen; however we are forgiven by a Jesus who loves us. Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross to save us from our sins. Jesus shed his blood for us. Moses established the law. However millenniums ago humankind found that it is futile to try to perfectly adhere to the law. If you even try for perfect adherence, the sin of self-righteousness creeps in. Jesus came to save us from this slavery to the letter of the law. Instead Jesus set an example of a new kind of law that is written on your heart -- like Jeremiah's new covenant. When you have a personal relationship with Jesus, you will gain a spirit that will make you want to live a Christian life. When you reach this stage of your spiritual journey, the law becomes not written words, but instead the law is written in your heart. Love becomes the source of the law that is written on your hearts. You then have a personal relationship with Jesus.

<>< Yours in Christ,

Lester Hemphill