

# The Old Paths

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## “The Need For Religious Unity”

Jarrod Jacobs

To say that there is religious division and turmoil in this world is to state the obvious. Clearly, there are divisions among people, people who are claiming to follow the same God! Truly this is a tragedy, for people who observe this from the “outside” see folks fighting who claim to be godly and religious. This causes some to turn away from the truth before they have a chance to learn it.

To state these things is to state something we all know. Yes, divisions come at times. The questions we must ask include why have divisions taken place? Also, what steps are being taken to encourage unity? Divisions are often based upon:

- **Prejudice** - In other words, some have made up their minds concerning “their” view, and will not accept Biblical truth if it conflicts with what they believe or think. For example, the Jewish leaders in Christ’s day were prejudiced against our Lord. Such action results in spiritual ruin if we are unwilling to repent when necessary.
- **Pride** - This has been the downfall of many through the years. Solomon stated, “*Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*” (Prov. 16:18). Pride will not allow folks to admit they

have sinned, or that they are wrong about certain things.

- **Parents** - Jesus had said that one who loves father or mother more than Him is not worthy of Him (Matt. 10:37). Yet, how many people could we find that base their religious convictions upon what mom or dad said? We forget that our parents are human too, and subject to sin and error like everyone else (Rom. 3:23)! Our parents deserve respect, etc. (Eph. 6:4), but we ought never think of them above what we ought (Rom. 12:3). Our parents’ thoughts and beliefs can be a source of division if we listen to them rather than to what is said in the Bible!

- **Preferences** - We live in a time when the “mega-churches” have become such because they cater to folk’s preferences, whatever they might be. At the same time, there are folks who choose a church to attend based upon how many “young” people, or “old” people attend; or based upon political connections; or upon who the preacher is! In addition to this, I have talked with folks who have plainly stated, “I prefer to go to ‘x’ church, and there is no changing me.”

These and other reasons for division are obviously wrong, and if followed result in confusion and

people being led away from God. Knowing that there is a need for religious unity among men today, how can this be achieved? Let us search the Scriptures and learn the correct basis for unity.

### How Unity Is Not Achieved

We have noted four ways in which divisions come. Yet, we must understand that unity is not achieved by merely ignoring or “glossing over” our differences. Ignoring differences does not make them go away. It does not achieve true unity. Ignoring differences may at best achieve a sort of “union”, but not unity! A good explanation of “union” is the old saying that if you tie two cats’ tails together, you may have “union,” but you won’t have unity! In like manner, when it comes to religious matters, we cannot simply act as if there are no differences and expect true unity! Calling a dog’s tail a leg does not make it a leg. So also, saying we have unity with no Biblical basis does not mean we have unity!

Let us remember the words of Jeremiah when he said, “*O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*” (Jer. 10:23). Truly, no man can achieve unity when he relies upon his own whims and thoughts. He needs direction and guidance from the Creator (Col. 3:17). In so doing, we will achieve something that the “religious” world has not, and be a godly example to those who are not Christians.

### How Unity Is Achieved

Let us understand that unity can be achieved, and in fact, unity is something spoken of frequently in the New Testament. Jesus prayed for unity (Jn. 17:17-24). He wanted unity among men as He

and God have unity. He saw that unity achieved would prove to the world that God exists and has sent Christ into the world. Remember how we began this study, stating that the world sees religious division and it turns them away from God? This is what Jesus said would happen in John 17. He also said that the world will know God sent Christ and loves all of us when they see the unity of His people.

The epistles speak of man achieving religious unity in I Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27 and 2:2. In addition to this, we are told to avoid those who would cause divisions and offenses (Rom. 16:17). How is unity achieved? It is achieved when men start following the same standard! When we forsake all others, and simply follow what the Bible says, we can have true unity! When we can put our finger on the verse, we can have unity (I Thess. 2:13). We also know if someone refuses the teaching, then he is refusing what God has said, not man. He has rejected *"the counsel of God"* (cf. Lk. 7:30)!

### Conclusion

Unity can be achieved and maintained today when we submit to God's standard for unity, the Bible. In so doing, we can have unity concerning what to do to be saved, spiritually acceptable worship, the organization of the local church, living a faithful life for God, and a multitude of other subjects which seemingly "divide" many. How can we have this unity? It is because we are living by the Bible standard, putting our fingers on the verses and then following them faithfully. Christ is our Lord, so let us do what He has said (Lk. 6:46; Matt. 7:21). When we do, we will have religious unity.

## The Beginning And End Of A False Doctrine

Jarrod Jacobs

**O**ne popular false doctrine taught today is the false doctrine wherein folks are told to pray Mary as a "Mediatrice" on our behalf. Often, those in the Catholic church will encourage their people to say "Hail Mary's" at various times. In other words, folks are encouraged to pray through Mary about things instead of through Christ. I Timothy 2:5 speaks of *"one mediator,"* not two! The Catholics teach us that Christ shares this office with His mother, but the Bible does not.

How this false doctrine came to be, I do not know. The Bible says Mary was called *"blessed"* by God, and she had a special purpose in carrying, delivering, and raising Jesus (Matt. 1-2; Lk. 1-2). However, it is wrong to place undue emphasis upon her, or think of her above what we ought (Rom. 12:3).

Recently, while reading Luke 11, I came across a conversation Jesus had with a person that I think answers this issue. This is why I titled this article, *"The Beginning And End Of A False Doctrine"*. It is because Jesus stopped a false doctrine in its

tracks with one sentence! Let us read Luke 11:27-28. *"And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."*

It seems as if this woman in Luke 11 had the same idea that the Catholics had in placing great emphasis upon Mary for the physical act of carrying a child. Jesus, in one sentence, stopped that false doctrine by reminding the woman and all who read those words today that the truly blessed person is the one who hears and keeps the word of God! Just because Mary carried Jesus did not mean she was somehow of greater worth than any other person. A parallel account in Matthew 12 records Jesus saying, *"Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother"* (Matt. 12:48-50).

Let us not fall into the trap of placing undue emphasis upon Mary (Rom. 12:3). Instead, let us respect her for her role in God's plan of salvation, and then focus upon Christ, our mediator, and *"the author and finisher of our faith"* (Heb. 12:2).

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