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Learning To Please God - Lesson #9
THE SADNESS OF RELIGIOUS DIVISION

By Charles Box

Many view the "church" as a group made up of all denominations. A denomination is a religious group separated from others by a particular name and doctrine. Original Christianity was "one church." Sadly, today the religious world is divided into numerous denominations. Denominationalism is opposed to the will of God. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (*1 Corinthians 1:10*) In *Ephesians 4:4-6* the Bible teaches that there is one church. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." This one church is the body of Christ. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (*Ephesians 1:22-23*) Today there are hundreds of "churches" in the world.

What divided original Christianity? Paul wrote to the Galatians to show that division was caused by men perverting the gospel of Christ. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (*Galatians 1:6-9*) The Devil is always busy trying to pervert God's message. He perverted God's statement to Adam and Eve. God told man that sin would lead to death. The Devil perverted the message. "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die." (*Genesis 3:4*) The Bible spoke plainly to show that men would depart from or fall away from the faith. (*1 Timothy 4:1*) This departure from the faith would come because men would not endure sound doctrine. (*2 Timothy 4:3-4*) One thing that caused original Christianity to be divided was a departure from the "one faith" to other beliefs. (*Ephesians 4:5*) Division is contrary to the will of God for His church.

What can be done about religious division? The faith was given once for all to Christians. It must be "contended for" in every generation. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (*Jude 3*) Our hope for unity rests in the original truth being preached; as it was before men turned away from it. (*John 8:31-32*) This truth which must be proclaimed with boldness is the word of God. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (*John 17:17*) We must restore the original unity of the church as it was before denominations divided it. This restoration can be accomplished only when the truth is proclaimed and truth must always be proclaimed in the correct spirit. (*Ephesians 4:15*) You can be a member of the church of Christ and never be part of any denomination.

Those who are saved are delivered by God into His kingdom or church. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." (*Colossians 1:13*) He has built only one church; but men have established many. All who comply from the heart with the conditions set forth in the Bible become Christians, members of the Lord's church. To become a Christian, you must hear the gospel (*Romans 10:17*), believe in Jesus (*Mark 16:16*), repent of sins (*Acts 2:38*), confess Jesus as Lord (*Romans 10:9-10*), and be baptized to be saved. (*1 Peter 3:21*.) Those who obey the gospel are saved and added to the church. (*Acts 2:47*) Are you a part of the one church of Christ that you read about in your Bible?

True or False:

1. _____ God's people must speak the same thing. (1 Corinthians 1:10)
2. _____ Truth is not as important as sincerity. (John 8:31-32)
3. _____ The Devil perverted God's message. (Genesis 3:4)
4. _____ Men often depart from God's truth. (1 Timothy 4:1)
5. _____ God's word is truth. (John 17:17)