



Jeff Sweeten

Thus Saith the Lord
is presented by the

Park Heights Church of Christ

1300 E. Boynton St.
Hamilton
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Schedule of Services

SUNDAY

9:30 a.m. Bible Class
10:25 a.m. Morning Worship
1:30 p.m. Afternoon Worship

WEDNESDAY

7:00 p.m. Bible Study

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GET ALONG

By Jeff Sweeten

Who wouldn't appreciate folks who like to get along? Paul is pointed in his perspective: ***"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"*** (Romans 12:18). It just makes for better relationships, less stress and fewer wounds to find those common grounds upon which we can all agree. This is especially the case religiously. However, does this mean *anything* goes?

Historically, this is not the case. One of the oldest treatises to discuss Christian division was penned by Irenaeus (the name means "peaceable") called *Against Heresies*. This mildly-named man was a fierce foe of error, learned first-hand from Polycarp who sat at the Apostle John's feet – quite an impressive scholastic lineage. His conviction: compromising truth on any Bible topic was verboten! When early Christians veered off into the false doctrine of Gnosticism, undermining Christ's Deity, Irenaeus ripped and tore into this unchristian cancer like Chemo-treatments through corrupt flesh, defending the body of Christ's doctrine with vigor (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-17). Irenaeus even recalled Polycarp's response to a heretic's greeting, "Dost thou know me?" as: "I do know thee, the first-born of Satan" (Bk. 3, Ch. 3, Sec. 4). Evidently, folks were blunt before PC and Woke compromised communication. Getting along religiously, even historically, had its limits.

So, the question becomes, does the Bible reveal limits to getting along? In a word, Yes! ***"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them"*** (Romans 16:17). Two things should be obvious in this text.

One, any religious doctrine that contradicts God's doctrine is ***"contrary to"*** it. God instructs humanity by what He says, not by what He doesn't say (Deuteronomy 29:29). If one does not find a direct statement, an approved example or a divine implication that something religious is acceptable to God, it is not authorized. Balaam should have heeded his own warning: ***"I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak"*** (Numbers 24:13).

Two, it is not those who hold to what the Bible states that create religious division; it is those who depart from revealed faith that cause ***"divisions and offenses"*** (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1). Too often, those who adamantly follow the Bible and do ***"all in the name of the Lord"*** (by God's authority, Colossians 3:17) are the ones that are accused of being divisive. Such is not the case! When one leaves the truth of the Word, ***"whatever is not from faith"*** (which comes by hearing God's Word, Romans 10:17) ***is sin"*** (Romans 14:23). Therefore, when one decides to do or say something religiously that is not found in the Bible, that person has not only departed from the faith, he/she causes religious division.

The much maligned "book-chapter-verse" that disfranchises so many religious doctrines and practices is unifying, not divisive (John 17:17). And, those who depart from it should be invited to get along!