

selves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4). This creates a challenge for us—how can we avoid division and yet be certain to avoid religious error? Is it even possible?

The answer is yes! What if we were all willing to wipe away human traditions and denominational names that do not have authority in Scripture? What if we trusted in the Bible alone as our guide for everything we do and teach? What if we resolved ourselves to do only those things the New Testament church did? What if all believers in Jesus came together in unity following these principles? What would we have? We would have simply Christians! Is it possible? Yes! Will we do it? That's the challenge.

will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:30). He wrote further, **"The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for them-**

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We are so glad that you joined us today.
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BULLETIN OF THE OLSEN PARK CHURCH OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings



Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM
10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:
Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:
Steve Dixon
Ryan Ferguson
Arend Gressley
Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott
Justin Smiley
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:
Kyle Pope

"Is Christ Divided?"

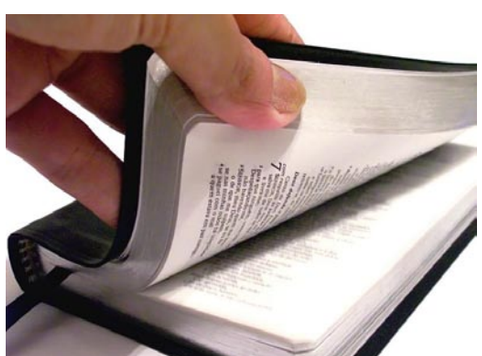
By Kyle Pope

The Amarillo phonebook lists seventy-seven different "types" of churches who all claim a belief in Jesus Christ. If we visited the worship services of these churches we would find each of them doing different things, teaching different things, and operating under a different type of church organization. In our day most are so accustomed to this diversity that they often accept and even defend it. As Americans we prize the freedom to choose and often view independent thought as something courageous and desirable. We choose our job, our home, our leaders, our favorite food, our favorite team—why not choose (some would ask) "the church of our choice?"

Imagine a different time and a different place. Go back in your mind to a time before there were Protestants, Catholics, Evangelicals, Charismatics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, or Episcopalians. Was there

ever a time when there were just Christians? Could it be that way again? Yes!

When Jesus walked on the earth He declared, **"I will build My church"** (Matt. 16:18, NKJV). After Jesus' death Paul spoke of this church that Jesus **"purchased with His own blood"** (Acts 20:28). When Jesus first *built* and *purchased* this church it was established and existed in unity.



Olsen Park church of Christ

Paul affirmed this when he told the Ephesians there is **"one faith"** and **"one body"** (Eph. 4:4-5). That church which belonged to Christ was not made up of different groups teaching and practicing different things. Paul taught the **"ways in Christ"—"everywhere in every church"** (1 Cor. 4:17). Jesus did not establish denominations—He established one church that was His church.

Sadly, this unity of faith and practice was compromised very early. The church in Corinth, splintered into different factions with some declaring, **"'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ'"** (1 Cor. 1:12). When this happened, did Paul take our modern attitude—"just pick the church of your choice"? No. In rebuke of this Paul asked them, **"Is Christ divided?"** (1 Cor. 1:13). The clear answer was no! If Jesus did not establish a divided church, it is clear that division is no acceptable to Him. In Paul's day (as in our own) while division may be a demonstration of free choice, it is an unacceptable and authorized demonstration of free choice. Paul further asked rhetorically, **"when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollo's,' are you not carnal?"** (1 Cor. 3:4). The clear answer here was yes! Division is **"carnal"**—a



sinful act of the flesh. Division stands in defiance of Jesus' prayer that, all who believe in Him **"may be one"** (John 17:21-22).

If Paul taught that division is sinful—if Jesus prayed for believers to be one—how must the Lord view our world today? Is God pleased with the religious division of modern times? If we believe the Bible He is not. While many people might acknowledge that God is not pleased with division, most imagine that it is unavoidable. Is that true? Must division be accepted? If not, how can it be corrected?

Although Jesus prayed for unity He also warned of religious error. Jesus warned, **"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves"** (Matt. 7:15). He said further, **"Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many"** (Matt. 24:11). This tells us there will be teachers who arise who seem as gentle and as innocent as sheep, but their message is evil and deceptive. Paul taught Christian leaders in Ephesus, **"From among yourselves men**