

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
149 Main Street
Madison Heights, VA 24572

MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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George B. Harris, Minister
Email: bernerdharris@yahoo.com
mhcc16@yahoo.com
Church Telephone: (434) 845-3855
Minister's Telephone: (434) 215-4846

Pam Hubbard
Music Director

Brenda Harris
Administrative Assistant

The Theology of the Apostle Paul part 2

We have had a series of sermons and newsletter articles on the Apostle Paul and his theology. There are perhaps three main things that Paul emphasizes; a doctrine that is centered on Christ, the necessity for a complete change of your life to one of devotion, and the joy of being blessed with God's grace. In regards to the orientation of our lives, the contemporary lesson for us is that we are to focus our lives on Christ. I preach this concept many times because it is taught in the Bible in many different places. It is another slice of same pie along with the concept of being born again and being dead to sin in order to live a new life. Focusing your life on Christ means not following the ways of the world but separating yourself from desires that society reinforces. That is not easy to do and we are far from it, but that is the goal. There is also a contemporary lesson for us in the call for unity. The call for unity is not just so that we can all get along but that we all get along when we are focused on Christ and follow his lessons. We are all united together when we are like Christ in love, compassion, sacrifice, and service. When we are one with Christ we are of one mind, one heart, and one spirit. And when we are one, we are united as one.

The Apostle Paul's doctrine is a theology that is centered on Jesus - what Jesus said and what Jesus did. Your relationship with Jesus is never about the other person, what someone else said, did, or should be doing. I cannot emphasize this enough. It is never about that. It is all about you and your relationship with the Lord. Your relationship with the Lord is a very personal thing. However, it is also a community thing. It is a matter of you living your life in accord with Christ. It is when we model our lives after Christ that we are one with Jesus and then we are all in harmony with one another. The American Reformation Movement was all about unity. It is individual preferences and self-righteous indignation that separate us. We will never agree on doctrine and creeds or what others should and should not believe. What can and should unite us is something we all can agree upon and that is to focus on who Jesus is and what he said and did. If we can all agree to focus on that then we can have a doctrine that we can all agree upon and that is a doctrine that is centered on Jesus.

The Holy Communion is a perfect example of unity. It is set up for us by Jesus Christ himself as an invitation to everyone where everyone is welcome. The table is a place where family and friends gather. The offering is Jesus offering of himself. We share together his body and his blood so that we can have Christ in us. Communion is oneness with Christ. What Jesus set up for us is an opportunity to be in solidarity. When we gather at the Lord's Table, we gather together in peace and love. We honor Jesus by accepting his invitation and by extending that invitation to everyone. Then we are in solidarity with him and with each other. It is very important to Jesus for us to be in solidarity with him and with one another. He set it up as a way to remember him by, to remember who he is, the life that he lived, the lessons that he taught, and the price that was paid on the cross. That is why the invitation is so important to us.

It is not just that we are all supposed to get along and have no division among us and sacrifice principals so that we appease someone who is upset. It is that we are united together and we all get along in harmony because we have surrendered our lives to Christ. We are like Christ. Everyone is to be the kind of person that Jesus teaches us to be. Everyone is to be a student of the teacher and learn the lessons of the teacher. Everyone is to follow him in his footsteps. It is when our doctrine is centered on Jesus and we are focused on who Jesus is, what Jesus said and did, that we are all in unity and we all live in harmony with one another.

George