Self-Examination and Self-Discipline: A Means to Unity

Intro: This topic is of necessity broken down into three major points. The first I want us to notice is unity.

I. Unity Based on Actions and Thinking and Speaking

A. John 17:20-21 “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

1. God desires unity for His people.
2. Is this a unity that is at any price?
   a. God authorizes some division.
      (1) Luke 12:51 “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:”
      (2) Rom. 16:17 “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”
      (3) 1 Cor. 5:2, 7 “And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.... 7Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:”
      (4) 2 The. 3:6, 14 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.... 14And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”
   b. Thus it is not unity at any price that God wants.
3. The criteria for unity as seen in John 17:6-18 “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 7Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. 8For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”
   a. The word which the apostles were to preach.
   b. The word which sanctifies us.

B. This unity is manifest in three ways.
1. Through what we say (preach and teach).
   a. 1 Pet. 4:11 “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”
   b. Mark 16:15 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”
c. 2 Tim. 4:2 “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

2. Through what we do (actions).
   a. 1 Cor. 5:11 “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one not to eat.”
   b. 2 The. 3:6 “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”

3. Through what we think (our mind).
   a. 1 Cor. 4:6 “And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.”
   b. Phi. 2:2-5; 4:2 “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:... I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.”

4. 1 Cor. 1:10 “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.”

II. Need for Self Examination

A. Mat. 7:1-5 “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”

1. Often we want just to correct others without looking at self.
2. Others sins always appear greater than our own.
3. This does not exclude judging others; John 7:24 “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

B. Duty to examine self.

1. Socrates “Man, know thyself.”
   a. The only way that this can be done is by bringing one’s thoughts, passions, and conduct into strict review.
   b. Self-examination is best expressed by the questions:
      (1) Have I been what I should have been?
      (2) Shall I be what I should be in doing so and so?
   c. Self-examination is the comparison of our motives and actions with the Ideal of what they should be.
   d. This is to be done in view of the scriptures.
      (1) The scriptures are our ideal.
      (2) 1 Cor. 13:12 “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”
      (3) Jam. 1:23-25 “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso
looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

2. This need is seen in the Scriptures.
   a. Job 13:23 “How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.”
   b. Lam. 3:40 “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.”
   c. Psa. 119:59 “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.”
   d. Hag. 1:7 “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.”
   e. Gal. 6:4 “But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”
   f. 2 Cor. 13:5 “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”
   g. “If Jesus did not in so many words call on men to examine themselves, yet the necessity and duty of such self-criticism were implied in all His ministry and teaching. In the sermon on the Mount, as in so many of His parables, He was holding up before men the ideal by which they must test their lives. And the same may be said of all the Apostolic Epistles (I Cor. 11:28; II Cor. 13:5).”

C. Suggestions for self-examination.
   1. Dependence on God and desire for His help.
      a. Psa. 139:23-24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
      b. Psa. 44:21 “Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.”
      c. God is the one who truly knows us.
   2. It must be objective.
      a. Seeing ourselves as God sees us.
      b. Seeing ourselves as we really are, not as we wish we were.
   3. Making sure that it is Christ living in us.
      a. 2 Cor. 13:5 “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”
      b. Gal. 2:20 “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
      c. Col. 1:27 “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”

III. SELF-DISCIPLINE
   A. Definition of discipline.
      1. W. E. Vines: It is an admonishing or calling to soundness of mind, or to self-control; 2 Tim. 1:7 “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”
      2. Universal Dictionary: “Systematic training, exercise, development, and control, of the mental, moral, and physical faculties.”
      3. ISBE: “The strenuous cultivation of the righteous life.”
      4. In the spiritual realm it is the control which we exercise upon ourselves in training and developing the righteous life and a soundness of mind governed by the scriptures.
B. The need for self-discipline.

1. Because of:
   a. The lust of the flesh; 1 John 2:16 “For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is *not* of the Father, but is of the world.”
   b. Satan; 1 Pet. 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”

2. Thus we are admonished:
   a. Luke 21:34 “And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and *so* that day come upon you unawares.”
   b. Rom. 13:14 “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts thereof.”
   c. Col. 3:5 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
      (1) Mortify is literally to put to death.
      (2) Mortify as applied here is to deprive of power the evil desires of the flesh.
   d. Consider the words temperance and self-control.

C. 1 Cor. 9:25-27 “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do* it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

D. Heb. 12:1 “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”

Conclusion: If each one of us examines ourselves in light of the scriptures, and will bring our attitudes and actions under the control of the scriptures then the end result will be unity within the body of Christ; for the scriptures will produce likeness (oneness).