I just want to write a comment on a topic on which I’ve been thinking this past time and this topic is about the difference and the variety that we find sometimes amongst the Christian church and belief in general. Now, some people might approve that and some others not, but we also need to see what the Bible says about it and we need to look into the matter in the right way, because we can clearly see how many different Christian denominations and points of view are there. This applies also on points of view on certain topics and ways of doing things amongst the believers. What could be wrong is to create separations amongst the believers because of this. We will also discuss which kind of separations might be right and which not according to the Bible. Because there are verses stating that separations need to happen (1 Corinthians 11:18, 19) and others stating that there need to be unity amongst the believers (1 Corinthians 1:10-12).

* **One Lord, one faith**

There clearly are different movements and denominations amongst the Christian world and I believe that there are verses that in part confirm that, because obviously we as believers are different, have different gifts, different ministries and different people to reach. There are also different cultures that we live in. This also affects a lot. What needs to be in common is the faith and the Spirit as Ephesians 4:4-6 says:

4*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

There is also one way, which is Jesus. Some people amongst the Christian faith and many others are against this separation and different kind of views that different Christian ministries are having and this is even bringing doubt in their hearts regarding the faith. Well, from one side as we know that there is a God, we need also to know that there is an enemy trying to bring confusion and separation many times amongst the believers and is even creating new and deceiving doctrines to lead astray people from the truth. From other side the Bible is also saying that we are different members that form one body and church in Christ. These different members can be found in a certain church where you see people with different gifts and ministries (given to them by God).

Nevertheless these different members of the body can also represent different Christian denominations, churches and ministries that together form the universal body of Christ. This is at least my opinion on the topic. I am saying Christian denominations because what they need to have in common is Christ, not just bearing that name, not just be called by it, but proclaiming the sound doctrine found in the Bible stating that only through that name can be found salvation and forgiveness for the sins. That’s why He is the way, the truth and the life.

**There is one body in each church and congregation** and this body is formed by believers who have their sin forgiven and are born again and **there is also one body that takes all the believers worldwide and form this universal body of Christ** which represents His bride for which He is going to be married one day in heaven and there is going to be this wedding feast for which the Bible is speaking about. The Bible doesn’t state that this bride is going to represent a certain denomination or place and neither there are going to be more and different brides representing these different denominations, but is rather speaking about one bride and one body of Christ. This is neither going to be one denomination, but believers from all of these different denominations, who have accepted Christ.

* **Be aware of deceit**

The problems is when the believers from different denominations say that only their denomination is going to be saved, that only their denomination is right, etc. We are different as believers and as denominations and we can all learn from each other. I am repeating that I am not obviously speaking here about erroneous doctrines and beliefs. They need to be cut out. We need to be careful from such. Even we alone can produce a different and erroneous belief in ourselves and be led by it. Our heart alone can deceive us as our heart is deceitful more than anything else (Jeremiah 17:9). We need to seek always for God and His wisdom to avoid it. Speaking about this topic of the different denominations I am addressing the denominations and churches with the right doctrine and belief with real believers in them, being born again. Sometimes there might be case when even if certain church is holding as a doctrine what is right and correct, I mean that their statement of faith is correct, there still may be found very few or even none of the real believers in it, as they will be not born again and will not have experienced God’s forgiveness.

Getting back to the topic, sometimes we can not say that just because a certain denomination is Baptist or Pentecostal (I am just giving random examples) is the only one being right in front of God.

**We as persons and as a particular denomination, do not hold the whole truth**. Yes, we are guided in it through the Holy Spirit, yes we have received God’s truth, but God is the one who has the whole and ultimate truth and we are busy learning and getting deeper and better into it. Saying that my denomination has the whole truth and none of the others has it, makes my denomination sectarian and we also read in one of the passages of the new testament that Jesus didn’t quite approved that.

38Now John answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.”

39But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. 40For he who is not against us is on our side.

Mark 9:38-40

We see by this verse that Jesus allowed that man to perform miracles as it was in His name and didn’t do anything against Him, saying also that no one working miracles in His name, can soon speak evil of Him, referring probably to the fruits that person is bearing.

There indeed need to be separations from other groups and even within the church sometimes, but what these kind of separations need to be based on? We can see what apostle Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 11:18, 19

18For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. 19For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

For which case was he referring to? For the one making a difference between those who really believe and follow Jesus and those who don’t really do it, but probably still attend church. This kind of separation mustn’t be forced many times as it happens naturally. The persons not following Jesus don’t actually have the same interests and motivations as those who do follow Him. All of this causes a natural separation. Paul was saying that in this case was normal a division to happen and those who are approved by the Lord were going to be recognized by this.

But there is another case in which a division occurs. That one is the one caused by men who look for divisions. This is the one which the Bible strongly opposes.

10Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s *household,* that there are contentions among you. 12Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 1:10-12

Here we see a separation that was caused by a kind of sectarianism or thinking that each one was just better and more right than the other. Sometimes we don’t realize that the body of Christ is multi-functional and each part is having a different function. This means that even if we see somebody having a different approach to situations or using different methods, doesn’t mean that he is not in the right way and doctrine, **it just means that the Lord is using him differently as he is another part of the body of Christ**. Many times seeing something different, something that is not in the exact way we do it, makes us to think that the person doing that is out of the sound doctrine. It is not in this way. When we see someone who doesn’t attain himself to the very basics, to the foundation, which is Jesus, then yes, the person is out of order, but otherwise it is not so. This same thing applies to the different denominations as well that could also be different parts of the body and have different methods. They all need to be based on the Bible, but some of them are probably more focused on teaching the scripture, others also teach it, but focus as well on sending missionaries or try to do humanitarian work through which spread the gospel. Some others are more dedicated in prayers, etc. Paul said: 29*Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? 30Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?  1 Corinthians 12:29, 30

All of this he was saying, means that not everyone was going to have the same gift and my personal aim and desire should be to spread the gospel, not to make the same identical persons as me! People need to know Christ, I cannot teach them to become like me. This is surely not the discipleship for which the Bible is talking about. Beside this, we are told to make Jesus’ disciples out of all the nations, not ours. We need to teach them what He said. We need to point them to Jesus, then He is going to form them and let them grow in the way that pleases Him.

18And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen. Matthew 28:18-20

This is the great commission Jesus gave to the disciples. We notice that they weren’t commanded to make “their” disciples.

To me it refers more to make Jesus’ disciples as it states that we need to teach people what He had commanded us. This is all with the purpose that they can **follow Him**.

* **Jesus, the eternal rock and foundation of the church**

Speaking about which is the right church and denomination, we cannot just name it. The right one is the one having Jesus, the eternal rock as its foundation and this is what should get the believers united. On this rock is found the right doctrine and the right way. On this rock which will not be prevailed by the gates of hell. Here on this rock is found all the variety and riches of God’s manifold grace. Jesus is in the bosom of the Father, who holds all the secrets and everything by the power of His word and hand, which is Jesus Himself. This is the right church and denomination and here we cannot use words or names to describe it. When Peter had a revelation that Jesus is Christ, meaning the anointed one, He gave him then the name Peter which means rock. He told him that on this rock he was going to found His church. We need to know that he was called in this way, because he had that kind of Revelation, not because of anything else. That’s why to me He was referring more on the revelation Peter was having, not that the church was going to be founded on Peter as a person. He was speaking more about the revelation of who Jesus is. He is the corner stone that holds the whole building together.

15He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

16Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

17Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:15-18

* **Good and wrong reasons for divisions**

The division that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 1:10-12 when everyone was saying “I am of Paul or I am of Apollos or I am of Cephas…” wasn’t founded exactly on the sound doctrine, but on each one’s opinion, caused probably by self-centeredness. We conclude that if there needs to be a separation, it needs to be regarding the basic Biblical doctrine, not just some parts of it or just some customs or appearance, but the very basis of it or what is fundamental. No one can tell us for example that there isn’t power in the name of Jesus or that there is another way of salvation. This is a real reason to avoid a doctrine and to pull out from it. There might be people that also hold the right and basic Biblical doctrine and their way can also be erroneous, but then we need to examine well as 1 John 4:1 tells us that we need to test the spirits whether they are from God.

That’s why we have the Holy Spirit and the word of God which help us to examine what we see and hear, and be led by the truth. The Bible also needs to be accompanied by the Spirit of God which gives us the right knowledge of it. They always go together.

One of the guaranties also, with which will be harder to get deceived, (not in everything, it will still be probably possible, but harder), **is to be born from God, is to be a real believer who holds the truth and is sealed by God’s Holy Spirit** (John 3:3). Then we can be also deceived in some points if we are not careful, but it will be harder to get fully taken by that.

In 1 John 4:3 we read that there are spirits that don’t confess that Jesus has come in a flesh and this is the spirit of the Antichrist. People believe to these spirits and get possessed by them. There are also persons that reject the Trinity or others thinking that salvation comes by works. These are some of the reasons for example for which someone might pull himself out from a certain group or create a division.

All the other reasons for divisions however are not so good and reliable. These are the cases that we mentioned before such as when someone stated that he is from Paul or Apollos, etc. Most of these statements were caused by men. **It happened when men started to observe the ways of other men, who, yes, were men of God, but just with different gifts and ways as the Spirit was giving to each one of them, and started to imitate and follow their ways instead of what the Spirit of God was teaching them**. Because even if godly men are teaching us the ways of God, their desire for us is to become more like Christ and not like themselves. They behave in a certain way, they perform things in a certain way and have certain gifts, because The Holy Spirit has guided them in a specific way and they are a certain part of Christ’s body, but this doesn’t mean that we are going to be the very same part of Christ’s body as them.

In the same way if we are teaching someone and guiding him into the truth, our desire must never be for him to become exactly like us. I mean in the gifts and the ways the Spirit is guiding us. in the rest of the Christian virtues as the basics of doctrine like faith, grace, love and truth, yes, they need to be in common. **We are different parts from one body. What is uniting us, is Christ, but for the rest, we might be different**.

Sometimes I saw persons imitating other persons of faith, like copying their behavior, etc. I even saw myself doing that. With time I acknowledged that this is not right. Yes, the Bible tells us to imitate other persons, but to me it speaks more about imitating their faith (Hebrews 6:12), which is to be bold like them in the faith, to have the desire they have for God, to seek for God like we see them doing, etc. We need to notice that all of this points to God, not to their personality or ways. This is what it means to imitate their faith. But to imitate their exact ways or their behavior points to them.

11And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:11, 12

Here is the passage telling us to follow in a way or imitate certain people, but if you notice, it speaks more about to show the same diligence and hope until the end, to imitate that part of them, so it refers more to the faith itself they were having. It refers also to people who inherit the promises through this faith and patience. This is the part that we need to learn from the others, not their exact way or behavior in certain situations, neither their personal character.

* **One body, many parts**

 The same applies for some different denominations. They are also part of the body. I am saying this, obviously for those who hold the truth. A certain denomination mustn’t reject another just because of the difference found in certain methods and doings they are having. Some denominations for example are more keen to believe and follow more certain parts of the Bible and others are into some other parts. This anyway mustn’t cause a division between them. This is because they are different parts but form the same body.

As a believer I cannot get over frustrated because I cannot perform certain things that other believers can. I can try, I can ask and put all of my desire for it, but this is all I can do. I cannot either try to assume or act as I have a certain kind of gift when I really don’t have it. Not all of us can be miracle doers or pastors or great preachers for example. All of this, doesn’t mean that we mustn’t desire it, but I may be able to preach to a congregation of ten persons or to my neighbor next door instead of preaching to thousands. This mustn’t frustrate me. If God is using me in this way and because it is for Him, it will have a great value. **The details are very important to God**. It is not in this way with us. We often neglect the details and the small things as we take them for not important. God instead gives importance even to something small and uses it. The fact that He cares for us who are so small comparing to everything else, shows it.

On the other way if I have certain gift given to me by God and I see another believer not having this kind of gift or having something apparently less than me, I mustn’t despise Him, saying or thinking that He is not important. On the contrary, who is stronger in the body needs to take care of who is weaker. The strong parts of the body need to take care of the weaker.

22No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty, 24but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, 25that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. 26And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it;* or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it.* 1 Corinthians 12:22-26

At the end who knows if a small kind of ministry will be more or less fruitful than big one for God? No one knows this for sure. We are just used by Him in the way that He wants to, in a way that is more suitable for Him. He decides this and knows what is the best. There were apparently “small” people in the Bible who accomplished great works for God. Such as David who was just being a simple shepherd, but managed to defeat a giant called Goliath with just a sling and a stone.

I heard also a story for a man of God who most of his time preached to small congregations, but eventually, some of the people who believed through his ministry, became later great men of God who were used to preach the gospel to thousands. Every one is important in the place where God has established him and is used by Him. The most important first obviously for that person is to know God, otherwise he cannot be just used by Him.

I am saying through this that what is most important, is to be the part that God wants us to be and to leave the outcome and the results to Him. He has placed each part of the body in a way it is more suited for Him.

18But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.  1 Corinthians 12:18

Looking at the two main passages where it speaks about the body of Christ ( 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:7-16) we can see how both of them, after mentioning all the variety of God’s multiform gifts, lead to the same point. To something that according to Paul saying in 1 Corinthians 12:31, is described as a more excellent way.

31But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. 1 Corinthians 12:31

And this is what we should aim to. After all the difference can be found there, (which is normal), there is this virtue that we all should desire, and this is the love. There is entire chapter written for it (1 Corinthians 13), exactly after the description of the different gifts and the body of Christ and after Paul saying that there is a more excellent way. This is what the believers should look for and have, and this is what will help them to get united as it is said in Ephesians 4:15, 16

15but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, **causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love**.

The previous two verses (Ephesians 4:13, 14) speak about the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God that will help us to be no longer tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine and deceit.

13till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, Ephesians 4:13, 14

See that everything is connected. The love, the unity, the growth we receive in Christ to be able to accept the others in unity, but to stand also firm in the sound doctrine. Christians should desire love above all and this is the perfection they should aim to. Not to achieve anything or have a position. The way to achieve something for God (not for ourselves, but for Him) is through love. This is in the center of all. It is not our kind of love, but the one coming through the cross of Jesus. Love doesn’t mean either that we need to tolerate everything as it says in 1 Corinthians that does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.

6does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 1 Corinthians 13:6

Everything started with love, the one that Christ showed on the cross for us and everything will finish with it.

This is why there should be unity among the believers and even among certain churches and denominations as we are all washed by the blood of Jesus and this is sufficient to unite us.

Why does He urge us to have love in the epistles to the Corinthians and the Ephesians right after speaking about the variety of the gifts and the different parts of the body? Because this is the way to get united. Because this is what He wants.

Oh, if all the barriers that separate us, could fall and be broken right now as this is preventing us from being united as a church and believers! United we can do and reach out much more. The enemy also knows that and that’s why he is probably trying to prevent this to happen. The unity should start within the church and then further on amongst the believers in general. I repeat that I am not speaking about being united with who holds an erroneous doctrine. On the other side, separation mustn’t obviously happen for any reason.

When a persecution happened along the history, the church in general was always more united and holding on each other. I don’t wish this to happen, so that we can get united, but let’s just think if there is a persecution, if they will be still discussing facts like rising or not your hands in a prayer or giving or not the tenth. I am just giving random examples, but sometimes sadly, a division happens because of these reasons.

The difference we might have among us, is there because we are different parts of the body of Christ and there is a specific purpose for each one of us. I am speaking on a personal level as parts of the body in a church and also on global level about the difference amongst the different Christian denominations.

Now, we mustn’t be confused. Saying all of this, I am not promoting unification amongst all the religions and even amongst all Christian denomination, because some of them might just be called with that name, but still not to hold the sound doctrine. Speaking about the sound doctrine, I am also speaking about the basic sound doctrine found in the Bible. There might be also some other difference in a doctrine that might be not so basic and fundamental. Like the speaking of different kind of tongues in a prayer for example or the belief in miracles. Some people might be more disposed to believe in them and some others might doubt it a bit more and so in this way, their denominations. If those people have one thing in common, and this is the most important and basic thing – to be washed by the blood of Jesus and believe in God’s forgiveness, then they belong to one body, they are brothers, no matter the difference they have in some other aspects. Those aspects just point that they have different gifts given to them by God and are different parts of the body having different functions.

Obviously we need to be careful of the deceit that sometimes comes in small portions and sneaks into the truth and the church to lead astray the believers. With this comment I made on the different denominations and on how to find unity amongst them and to overlook certain differences they have (not something fundamental), I didn’t mean to overlook basic differences, even looking small in our eyes. We just need to have the right discernment coming by His Spirit into our life to see what is fundamental and basic, what could be accepted and what not.