Grace and Fellowship

Psalms 133:1

Introduction:

A. No informed person denies that brethren have divided over basic doctrinal issues.
   1. Issues causing division between churches of Christ & Christian churches.
   2. Issues causing division between “conservative” and “liberal” churches of Christ.
B. Concerned persons have asked, “How can we restore unity and fellowship between these brethren?”
   1. Change convictions through Bible study.
   2. Compromise convictions for sake of unity.
   3. Construct a rationale for “unity in diversity”.

Discussion:

I. The Rationale Offered to Such Unity and Fellowship by Some Is Rooted in Calvinism.
   A. Imputed righteousness.¹
   B. “Doctrine” - “Gospel” distinction.
      1. Artificial distinction. (1 Tim. 1:10,11)
         a. “Gospel” and “doctrine” In Romans (1:15; 10:16; 6:17,18).
         b. Transgressing “doctrine” breaks fellowship. (2 Jn. 9)
            (1) Not just Doctrine about Christ’s deity.
            (2) Referred to as truth, commandments. (vv. 1-2,4).
            (3) Similar expressions. (Rev. 2:14,15)
      2. Doctrine is cause to “mark and avoid” (Rom. 16:15,16).
   C. Misconceptions of Grace and Law.
      1. Perversion of 1 John 1:7-10.
      2. Unconditional grace for Christians.
   D. Mistaken views of consistency.
      1. Think all differences must treated alike.
      2. Think must either tolerate all difference or none.
      3. Fail to discern differences in differences.
         a. Matters that are not threat to the faith or unity.
         b. Matters that are basically individual in application.

II. The Rationale Offered for Bible Unity Is Quite Different.
   A. “Keep the unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:1-4)
      1. Maintain unity established by the Spirit. (2:18).
      2. Three parties to unity. (2:14-17).
   B. Wisdom from above. (James 3:17, 18).
   C. Basis of the appeal for unity in Eph. 4 (one’s).

Conclusion:

A. Divisions caused by solely by attitude can be healed with change of attitude.
B. Divisions caused different basic convictions healed by changing convictions.

¹"But there is a sphere where sin is not imputed to the sinner and that sphere is in Christ” “Christ is ... a representative law-keeper who justifies other by His obedience” (Edward Fudge, G.G., 2/12/70).