

## **CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR UNITY** **(John 17)**

### **I. The pattern for unity.**

- A. In our High Priest's prayer, He reveals the only pattern for unity (vs. 11, 21).
- B. One of the many things that stand out in our Lord's life is that He and His Father were of the same mind.
  - 1. The goals of the Father were the goals of Son.
  - 2. At a young age Jesus said...(Luke 2:49).
  - 3. During His ministry He said...(John 9:4, 17:4).
- C. Jesus knew that He came to this earth to die and that it was the will of the Father.
  - 1. Revelation 13:8.
  - 2. 1 Peter 1:20.
  - 3. Jesus knew His role was to die and He did not hesitate because He and His Father were united as on.
- D. Jesus is our supreme example in all things (1 Peter 2:21; John 13:15).
  - 1. This includes being united.
  - 2. We must remember His words, "...that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:23).

### **II. The platform for unity.**

- A. On what grounds are we to be united with each other and the Lord?
  - 1. Is the platform a simple belief in Christ as Lord?
  - 2. Is it a recognition of His atoning work at Calvary?
  - 3. These are conclusions that men have devised.
- B. By studying this prayer we see those conclusions are wrong.
- C. The platform for unity, the basis on which Christians are united with each other and the Divine, is God's Holy Word.
  - 1. John 17:17.
  - 2. This sanctifying word was given to the apostles by Jesus and He stated it was from God (17:8).
  - 3. Later in the prayer, Jesus said...(17:20).
- D. Any religious joining that is not based on truth is false.
  - 1. Colossians 3:17 - must be based on the authority of Christ.
  - 2. Authority is obtained through the New Testament.
- E. John 17:21 - can only have religious unity with those in Christ.
  - 1. Only way into Christ is baptism.
  - 2. Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27.
- F. Some might say this is narrow or limited, but the Lord set the boundaries.
  - 1. John 17:9.
  - 2. The distinction is made by Jesus Himself.

### **III. The purpose of unity.**

- A. Why did the Lord place so much emphasis on unity in His prayer?
  - 1. The reason is stated twice by the Lord.
  - 2. Vs. 21 and 23.

- B. The purpose is for the world to know who Christ is.
- C. When the world see Christians being one, they will be interested.
  - 1. Man-made organizations are not noted for unity.
  - 2. God never intended for His people to be divided.
  - 3. Philippians 2:3-4.
- D. This is what is heart-breaking about religious division.
  - 1. People become turned off to Christianity.
  - 2. They become confused and interest in spiritual things is lost.
- E. All the ism's plaguing the world must be fought at every turn so that people can see the truth and know Christ.
- F. Christians are a manifestation of the wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:9-10).
  - 1. When the world looks at the church, it should see the wisdom of God.
  - 2. However, when unity is absent, His wisdom is not seen.
  - 3. That is not God's fault, it is ours.
- G. It is our role as Christians to do as Paul told the Ephesians (4:3).
  - 1. Notice this statement by Cecil Wright: "Unity in Christ is also called, "unity of Sp, most likely meaning that unity is furnished & wrought by teaching of HS thru inspired men."
  - 2. This unity is shown by Paul to be sevenfold (Ephesians 4:4-6).
- H. When these 7 things are believed and kept there can be unity.
  - 1. However, won't be unity if vs 2 is not followed.
  - 2. Unity is explained in vs. 4-6 but put into practice in vs 1-2.
  - 3. I can believe all 7 aspects of unity, but have a divisive spirit and not be united as God wants.
- I. It must be the goal of every Christian to dwell together in unity.
  - 1. Only occurs when we put others first.
  - 2. 1 Corinthians deals with a factitious spirit in a congregation.
  - 3. Paul presents himself as an example of how not to be divisive when he wrote...(1 Corinthians 10:33-11:1).
- J. Only when Christians follow the example of seeking the best for others first can the purpose for unity be met.

#### **IV. Problems in achieving unity.**

- A. In the opening statement of a book about unity, Curtis Cates wrote: "never in our lifetime have those who profess to be members of the Lord's church...been so divided. Never has the biblical teaching on love & unity been more perverted by brethren than today. The permissive, Humanistic, "do your own thing," situation ethics, anti-law, lascivious, sectarian attitude of the world has so invaded & influenced the Lord's church that sin, indeed, outright rebellion against God and against His Word is tolerated, even encouraged, under the guise of toleration and so-called unity."
- B. We need to make sure that we understand that there is never to be unity at the cost of truth.
- C. The One who prayed for unity preached... (Matthew 10:34-39).
  - 1. John 14:15 - this is how we show our love for Christ.
  - 2. His commandments say...(Ephesians 5:11).

- 3. Man-made religions divide and that is an unfruitful work of darkness.
- 4. Yet how many in the church cry for unity with denominations?
- D. There can never be compromise on this issue.
- E. We cannot have unity at the cost of truth for sake of unity.

**V. The plea for unity.**

- A. There is a right and proper plea that goes out from the Bible.
  - 1. That plea is to meet over an open Bible and study God's word, then be obedient to it.
  - 2. As the pioneer preachers said, "Let us speak where Bible speaks...Do Bible things in Bible ways."
- B. Can only be united with the religious world if they are united with Christ.
- C. Only place for this unity is on the word of God.
- D. Jesus is known as Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) and He has a great desire for us to have peace (John 14:27), and is even called our Peace (Ephesians 2:14).
  - 1. Only way to have peace is to follow gospel.
  - 2. Galatians 6:16.