

## **A GREAT NEED THAT IS HARD TO MAINTAIN (John 17:21-23)**

### **1.Unity described (John 17:21-22).**

- a.Our Lord was hours from His being crucified.
- b.He was with the apostles and giving them encouragement to be able to face life without Him leading them physically on earth.
- c.They needed comfort and strength.
- d.Besides comforting them with promises of divine aid in the form of the Holy Spirit, He did what we like people to do for us when we need comfort: Jesus prayed.
  - i.The entire chapter is a record of this beautiful prayer.
  - ii.It is this prayer that is truthfully the Lord's prayer.
- e.In this prayer Jesus prayed for all of His followers, those who believe on Him through the apostles teaching (John 17:20).
  - i.Jesus was praying for me and for you hours before His death.
  - ii.You and I were on His heart a short time before His cruel, harsh treatment by the Jews.
- f.He prayed for us that we might be one.
  - i.Jesus prayed for unity among those who profess to believe in Him.
  - ii.The Godhead has always despised division (Proverbs 6:16-19).
- g.So that we may fully understand the unity desired by the Lord for His people, Jesus gave us a description of that unity.
  - i.As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.
  - ii.Jesus described this unity among believers in Him as the unity and oneness that exists between God the Father and God the Son.
- h.What type of unity was that?
  - i.John 11:41-42.
  - ii.John 10:30.
  - iii.John 8:29.
  - iv.Matthew 17:5.
- i.It is a type of unity that is attuned to one another and entirely about doing the will of the Father.
  - i.Jesus always did those things that pleased the Father.
  - ii.Jesus worked the works of God (John 9:4).
  - iii.There was nothing selfish, envious, devious, or any other sinful thought involved in the relationship between Father and Son.
- j.It is a beautiful and all-encompassing description of unity.
  - i.Biblical unity is based on pleasing God by following His commands.
  - ii.Anything we do that disrupts unity or causes division is sinful and fails to live up to this description.
- k.A.W. Tozer gave a tremendous illustration of unity when he wrote: "Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow."
  - i.It has nothing to do with the individual pianos.
  - ii.It has everything to do with being tuned to the same fork that gives off the same sound every time.
- l.We aren't striving for unity with one another, we are striving for unity with God.

m. When each of us does that then we will be united with one another.

## **2. Unity desired (John 17:21-23).**

a. Why is unity desired by our Lord?

i. Why does it matter if we have a little squabble or battle royale?

ii. Why is there concern when two brethren don't get along?

iii. Why is it a problem for families to get into it with one another?

b. The world is watching.

c. We aren't going to be able to do this justice in the time we have today but notice these reasons why unity is desired in the church.

d. Jesus said unity like that between Him and the Father is important because it allows the world to have a basis for belief that He was sent here by God.

i. That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

ii. When people see the church of Christ, that which belongs to Him and is following Him united together in Him, they can have faith that Jesus is who He claimed to be.

e. Jesus also desired unity because we can head towards perfection, or completeness.

i. That they may be made perfect in one.

ii. You and I can't be perfect, complete, in the midst of division.

iii. Think about your body, which comparison Paul makes to the church we noticed a few Sundays ago.

(1) Are you complete when a part of your body is broken?

(2) Are you complete when a part of your body is not functioning as it should?

iv. We can't be complete in the church when division is harming us.

f. Jesus also desired unity because it shows the world God loves us just like He loved the Son.

i. Think of the love God the Father has for God the Son and vice versa.

ii. That same love is shown to us as children of God.

iii. This love is to be shown to one another, which allows the world to behold what true agape love is and there will be those who want to receive that type love from others.

g. Unity is desired ultimately, because it promotes and allows for growth of the body and in the end, in the presence of the Godhead for all eternity.

## **3. Unity determined (Ephesians 4:4-6).**

a. How do we know there is unity in a congregation or between brethren?

b. Paul, by inspiration, laid out seven planks on which we must stand together for their to be unity.

c. Like the last point, we don't have time to go into great detail about each but we must note them.

d. There is one body.

i. Colossians 1:18.

ii. This means there is one church, the one Jesus purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28).

e. There is one Spirit.

i. This is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

ii. It is through the Holy Spirit we are taught how to enter the body (1

- Corinthians 12:13).
    - iii.It is through the Holy Spirit we received the scriptures (John 16:13).
  - f. There is one hope.
    - i.Paul tells us that we are saved by hope (Romans 8:24).
    - ii.This hope is the hope of heaven that we share as Christians.
  - g. There is one Lord.
    - i.We have one Master, Jesus the Christ.
    - ii.It is through Him that we are saved and no other (Acts 4:10-12).
    - iii.He is the only Way (John 14:6).
  - h. There is one faith.
    - i.This is the system of faith by which man is saved.
    - ii.It is the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
    - iii.It is the collection of teaching to which we must be obedient (Acts 6:7).
  - i. There is one baptism.
    - i.This is immersion in water.
    - ii. There is only one baptism to which man must submit (Acts 2:38).
  - j. There is one God.
    - i.All three members of the Godhead are mentioned.
    - ii.Though there are three beings, they share the same will and desire for man, each involved in bringing salvation to mankind.
  - k. Notice something: none of these are in need of me or you adding our two cents to them.
    - i. You and I are to agree on them and let them be the foundation of our lives.
    - ii.If we can't get along, we aren't being obedient to the faith.
    - iii.If we are striving to get our way, we are striving against the Godhead who have laid out the plan for us to be and stay saved.
    - iv.We are fighting against God's plan if we are fighting with one another.
  - l. The basis for our unity is found here and any infighting or deviation from these is a breach of unity.

#### **4.Unity delivered (Ephesians 4:1-3).**

- a.Our Lord has described unity for us.
- b.Our Lord has shown us why unity is desired.
- c.The Holy Spirit has shown how unity is determined.
- d.How do you and I deliver it?
- e.Again, the Holy Spirit lays this out for us through the pen of the apostle Paul.
- f.Ephesians 4:1-3.
  - i.Paul describes a united Christian family, or congregation, as walking worthy of our calling, or vocation.
  - ii.When we are united, we are living a life that is worthy of the gospel call that has been extended to us (2 Thessalonians 2:14).
- g.We do it with all lowliness and meekness.
  - i.This is humility.
  - ii.How many congregations have been torn apart, and how many souls lost, because of a lack of humility?
  - iii.Meekness is placing our strength under the control of Christ.
  - iv.Humility allows us to do the Lord's will and not our own.
- h.We do it with longsuffering.

- i. This has to do with tolerance and forgiveness.
- ii. You and I have to tolerate one another, not run over one another or force our opinions on one another.
- iii. One writer made the point that this is the word used for God's patience with mankind, and it is often translated "patience".
- iv. We must be patient with one another.
- i. We are forbearing one another in love.
  - i. Our love for the Lord and one another causes us to put up with one another.
  - ii. We sacrifice for one another because the Lord puts up with us.
- j. Then notice the word "endeavouring".
  - i. This word has in its meaning the idea of urgency.
  - ii. It also has the idea of hard work combined with devotion.
  - iii. You and I are to hastily work hard with devotion to maintain unity in a congregation.
  - iv. It is the unity taught by the Holy Spirit, so it is within the limits of truth.
  - v. It is to be done being bound by peace with one another.
- k. This takes great effort and it is done with haste but done well.
  - i. It is done with urgency because of the effects of disunity.
  - ii. We should let nothing stand in our way of being united, not even our own wishes or will.