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## A Prayer for Unity

John 17:11; 20-22

***What is the greatest testimony of a believer's faith in the capitol? What best demonstrates before others that we are followers of Jesus Christ and that our lives have been changed by grace and the gospel? Is it our stand on the social and moral issues of the day? The Bible makes clear the true demonstration of our faith in Christ. Jesus said "By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). He exhorted His followers to "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). In His prayer in John 17 Jesus prays to His Father for unity among His followers "so that the world may believe that You sent Me" (vs. 21, 23). Are any of these less true in the challenging environment of the statehouse? The greatest testimony we can have is the love and unity demonstrated in the lives of true followers of Jesus Christ!***

We have come to the last request for which Jesus prayed on our behalf in "The Real Lord's Prayer" in John 17 – His prayer for unity.

### Jesus' Prayer for Unity

*<sup>11</sup> I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.*

*<sup>20</sup> "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. <sup>22</sup> The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; <sup>23</sup> I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.*

Jesus prays that His followers would have true unity, and that they would express this unity before a lost world. From His prayer we can learn much about the unity believers have in Christ. We should consider how this unity might be lived out in the challenging environment of the capitol.

### The Basis for Unity

There are four types of unity mentioned in the Bible. The unity between the persons of the Holy Trinity. The unity between the two natures – human and divine – in Jesus Christ. The unity between followers of Christ and Himself (Col. 1:26; Gal. 2:20). And, finally, The unity of Christian people among themselves and with each other. We should keep in mind each of these relationships as we consider the subject of unity among believers.

This unity is not external, organizational, denominational, or political. It is spiritual. Whatever this unity is, it is like that between God the Father and God the Son!

Just as Jesus' prayer for sanctification had both a positional and a practical aspect, so does His prayer for unity. Positionally, if we are truly believers in Jesus Christ, then we ARE ONE with each other. That is a fact. That is our position in Christ. Jesus prays that "**they (believers) may be one, even as We are**" (vs. 11). Jesus does not pray that this unity will come to be. Rather He prays that this unity which is already existing may be kept, continued, and preserved by the Father.

This amazing unity is based on truth. Those who have this unity have received and obeyed God's Word (vs. 6, 8, 14). This unity only comes about through the relationship we have with God through faith in Jesus Christ and His gospel.

The bible makes it clear there are circumstances where there is no unity. There is to be no unity with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-18). There is to be no unity with false teachers (2 John 7-11). There is to be no unity with those who claim to be believers yet continue in a lifestyle of blatant sin (1 Cor. 5:9-13).

### **The Expression of Unity**

Jesus' prayer for unity also has a practical aspect. Jesus prays that we will practically express the unity that already exists. We are one in Christ with every other true believer. Jesus prays that we will demonstrate, live out, and live up to that unity.

Consider the powerful descriptions we find of the unity believers have in Christ. We are children in the same family. We are members of the same body (Rom. 12:5). We are stones in the same building (1 Peter 2:5). We are branches in the same vine (John 15).

Because of the truth that we are one in Christ, the New Testament places a huge emphasis on living out the unity. We should take time to study and apply the following passages:

Acts 1:14 and 4:32 describe the unity in the early church. Romans 12:3-16; 15:5-7; 15:30; Eph. 4:1-13; and Col. 3:12-13 all describe the practical ways we should express this unity.

### **The Purpose of Unity**

In His prayer Jesus makes clear the purpose of this unity. It is so that the world may know and believe that the Father had sent the Son.

*"...that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."* (vs. 21).

*"I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."* (vs. 23).

This does not mean that all the world will come to faith in Christ. It does mean that the lost world will recognize that Jesus Christ came, lived, died, and rose again and has made a great difference in the lives of those who have repented and believed in Him. Jesus' prayer for unity indicates that perhaps the greatest way we demonstrate to the world the difference Christ has made in our lives is by the unity and love we show to our fellow believers.

### **What Hinders Unity?**

There are some particular issues that hinder our unity with fellow believers. Deviating from the clear teaching of God's Word can (and should) be cause for separation. Adding to the Bible or demanding things that are not demanded in the Word will hinder unity. Exalting doctrines or issues to a first priority when they should be in second or third place will damage the expression of our unity. Lastly, how we live and conduct ourselves can greatly harm our unity with our brothers and sisters. Pride, selfishness, and unforgiveness (temptations to which we may be particularly susceptible in the capitol) are issues with which we all must contend.

### **Unity in the Capitol**

The greatest expression of the unity about which we have been speaking takes place in the local church. However we must ask ourselves how we as believers express this unity in the capitol. If we are genuinely followers of Christ, then WE ARE ONE IN CHRIST! That relationship does not end or change when we enter the world of politics. To separate from true brothers and sisters and fail to express this unity if a big deal! This leads us to some challenging questions for further thought and discussion.

How is your faith best demonstrated in the capitol?

How do you express this unity when you differ with others on various political issues?

#### **BIBLE STUDIES**

Thursdays, 12:00 Noon

MCMANUS (House) CONFERENCE ROOM

(252-M Located by minority offices near House chamber)