

Redwater Restorer

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3)

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The Unity For Which Christ Prayed (John 17:20-23)

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Church of Christ

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Introduction

In our previous articles we discussed "The Restoration Plea" of the New Testament church. When the New Testament church is restored according to pattern set forth in God's word those in that spiritual body will be "Christians Only" and will enjoy true biblical unity. Let's now discuss this principle of true biblical unity.

The Prayer For Unity

Spiritual unity is truly a blessing which only God can provide. The psalmist says in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" It is this same spiritual unity that the Lord prayed for in John 17. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John 17:20-23). Our Lord's desire is that we be one with Him, and with one another. The oneness He desires for Christians is parallel to the oneness shared between He and the Father. What a tremendous, excellent, and lofty goal. However, that spiritual unity

for which He prayed is not some "pie in the sky" ideal, but rather an attainable goal for which we must strive. To strive for any lesser goal is to count the blood of the covenant for nought.

The Preciousness Of Unity

Unity is so precious because of the price God paid that we might have it. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both **one**, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain **one** new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in **one body** by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:" The unity God affords us cost Him His Son and cost the Son His life. When man compromises biblical unity he counts the blood of the covenant for nought.

The Problem Of Unity

In the world today there are no less than 300 religious denominations all claiming to follow one standard, God's word, yet each of them having various doctrines that contradict one another. Friend, I ask you to be honest with yourself: Does this sound like the unity for which Christ prayed and for which He shed His blood. It surely doesn't to me and most importantly it doesn't to God either. Notice how God's word defines true biblical unity. "Now I

Unity... (Cont.)

beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10, See also Philippians 1:27 and 3:16). Christians must be of the "same mind," and "same judgment," and "same rule," not differing doctrines! Christians must be "striving together," not competing! When we accept this concept of biblical unity we can be one with those of our local congregation, those in other parts of the world, **and those in the first century church.** Christ prayed for unity among Christians, world-wide, throughout the ages. Denominationalism can not achieve that for which Christ prayed and gave His precious blood to attain.

A Plea For Unity

The question is: Are you willing to strive for it? The purpose of this publication is to search for that basis of unity found in God's word. Not a unity which simply agrees to disagree, but a unity founded upon God's word. Much of the religious world has settled for **union** rather than **unity**. There is a vast difference between the two! As one old preacher once said, "You can tie the tails of two cats together and achieve union, but not unity." God demands unity! If you are interested in searching for that unity I encourage you to follow along with me in a study of God's word set forth in this publication.

The Prescription For Unity

What type of mindset is essential to attain unity?

1. We must have an honest heart. In Luke 8:4-15, the Lord spoke the parable of the soils. In that

parable He describes four types of soil. However, only one was fruitful. "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). To attain the unity God desires we must have that honest and good heart.

2. We must have a sincere desire to learn God's word, to learn God's mind, to achieve unity with Him. The seed that is planted in the honest heart is the word of God (Luke 8:11). For that seed to bring forth fruit we must have the readiness of mind for which Paul commended the Bereans. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). Listen carefully, whether you are reading this publication, or studying with me or some other man in person, never accept any doctrine based on the authority of man (Matthew 15:7-9, Galatians 1:6-11). Search the scriptures, "prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

As we study the word of God we should not be asking ourselves, "What do I think when I read this verse?" or "How does it make me feel?" The question we should be asking is, "What was in the mind of the inspired writer?" When we strive for that understanding we will have attained God's thoughts and will have found the true basis for unity with God. The religious bodies of the world are divided (denominational) because they subject God's truth to their desires and experiences. Overcome that fault and a precious unity with God and His children awaits you. I invite you to follow along in this study, searching the scriptures, accept-

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