

UNITY

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Whether one speaks about a family, a work force, or the church, unity is of vital importance. When it exists, it is truly sweet. The Psalmist exclaimed, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalms 133:1). If unity exists, it is because everyone involved is striving for it. The inspired apostle Paul expressed, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;” (Philippians 1:27). It is an attitude of “standing fast in one spirit” and an attitude of “striving together” that creates an atmosphere of unity.

Jesus Prayed for Unity

In the true “Lord’s Prayer” (John 17), Jesus prayed for the unity of all believers. Jesus petitioned the Father saying, “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:” (John 17:21-22). The fact that Jesus petitioned the Father for the unity of all believers should show us that true unity is possible. Many today are pressing for unity that is not really unity at all. They call it by different names but no matter how they refer to it, it is not unity. Notice that the quality of unity for which Jesus prayed was as “we (the Father and the Son) are one”. The unity that existed and exists between the Father and the Son was not some pseudo-unity in which they agreed to disagree. It was a unity of love, mind, and purpose. This is the unity that we as Christians are to seek.

The Reality of Unity

There are two facts that help us to understand that unity can be a reality. First, Jesus prayed for unity and second, unity existed in the church in the first century. The church in the first century had their problems as we do in this century. They needed to be encouraged to maintain unity as we need to be encouraged to maintain unity. The very fact that we can find such words of encouragement by inspired men should tell us that they thought and the Holy Spirit thought that unity can exist in the church. To the Philippians Paul said, “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 2:2). Peter exhorted, “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1Peter 3:8). And it is unity that John spoke of

when by inspiration he proclaimed, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1John 1:7). Since the Holy Spirit entreats us to strive for and to maintain unity, we must make every effort to have the kind of unity that existed between the Father and the Son.

The Basis For Unity

There is a standard for ALL that pertain to religion. That standard is the word of God. It is the standard for which unity is based. The word of God teaches what man must do in order to be saved. All those who truly seek to understand and to do what God says concerning salvation stand united on the standard of God’s word. The word of God teaches how men are to worship God. All those who truly seek to understand and to do what God says concerning worship stand united on the standard of God’s word. The word of God teaches how men are to serve God. All those who truly seek to understand and to do what God says concerning service stand united on the standard of God’s word. When men leave the standard, they wander off into apostasy. Concerning unity, when men leave the standard, they create disunity and discord whether or not they call it such.

Therefore, let us all endeavor to gain and to maintain the unity for which Jesus prayed. Let us never quit in our toil to understand the standard for all things pertaining to religion. And let us ever “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”