

# Unity in Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] I hope everyone understands the concept of the High Priestly Prayer.

! In ancient Israel, God had established a system of worship.! And once a year on the Day of Atonement,! the High Priest of Israel the human High Priest would enter into the temple, Holy of Holies, and there make atonement.

He would intercede. First he made atonement for himself, then his family, and then for the nation. This was the intercessory ministry of the High Priest of Israel, the human High Priest. He can only do it once a year on the Day of Atonement.

And I think I've told you that they had to tie a rope on him because if he made a mistake, God would strike him dead and they couldn't go in after him.

He came out like a fish. It was an elaborate 24-hour ceremony. You can read about it in Leviticus, particularly chapter 16. Christ, in this chapter, John 17, has entered into his High Priestly calling.

[ 1 : 34 ] He is the High Priest. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H.

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Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. Capito H. had entered into the high priestly work.

And so this is what this prayer is all about. Now, for those who are true believers, and I hope that's everybody, these words should thrill our hearts. We have a high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us.

And it is in the closing portion of this prayer, which is divided in three parts. We've already looked at part one and part two. Where the Lord Jesus now prays for us.

[ 2 : 45 ] And by that, do I mean Highland Park? Yeah, I do. And any other true church. And you all know churches are not buildings. They're people.

And, you know, there's a lot of people walking on earth that claim to be Christian, and some are. That don't realize that they're in the Bible. And if you're one, let me show you, because you're going to discover yourself here in the Word of God.

John chapter 17, starting in verse 20. Jesus talking to the Father, Father, I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word, 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.

The glory which you have given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one, just as we are one, 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 love them, even as you have loved Me.

But He says there, I do not pray for these alone, and that's the disciples, the early apostles, but for those who believe in Me through their word.

[ 4 : 18 ] And they preached the word, but more importantly, they wrote the word. They wrote the 27 books of the New Testament. And millions have believed as a result of that written word.

People are being saved today through the written word. Unity in Christendom is not organizational. It is spiritual.

If we were in organizational unity, then most of us would be sinning, because there's all these denominations that are not united. Which one is the real one?

The Roman Catholics believe they are the true church, that everybody else is an offshoot, lesser members of the kingdom. Our Catholic friends are not alone in that belief system.

The Church of Christ believes that, that they are the true church. If you find a church of Christ, and go look in most of their buildings, they have a plaque on the cornerstone, and it will say, the Church of Christ founded in 33 A.D. by Jesus of Nazareth.

[ 5 : 24 ] First Christian Church in Dewey has that, or had when I was growing up. That's where I went to church. If unity was arrived at by organization, we should all be members of one physical church on earth, be it Catholic or Methodist or Baptist or whatever.

But the unity spoken of here is spiritual, meaning it is an inward reality based upon the individual's union with Christ.

Paul spoke of this in 1 Corinthians 6.17, but the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with him. Now commenting on this verse, the writers of the Westminster Confession of Faith said this, the Catholic, and by that, that is not Rome, okay, the Catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head, the head thereof, and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

The question is this, how can we recognize the spiritual unity spoken of by Christ? And let's face it, we don't live in a time when we go around hanging on our necks a little sign that announces to the world that we are a believer united to other believers through Christ.

We just don't have those signs. And again, we appeal to the Apostle Paul, he's a good person to appeal to, by the way, who wrote of the unity that characterizes true believers in the true church.

[ 7 : 18 ] And listen to the words in the book of Philippians, which the pastor began a study on Philippians yesterday. Philippians chapter 2, the first couple of verses. Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in Spirit, intent on one purpose.

And there we have a great example of spiritual unity. In two verses in this great book, we see four characteristics of the unity of true believers.

And these are their distinguishing marks. Being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in the same Spirit, and intent on one purpose.

that's our unity. And unity first results when believers are of one mind. Now, let me quickly add, this does not mean that every believer has the same likes and the same dislikes.

I've heard it rumored that not even married couples have that level of unity. I would know that myself, of course. But within the church, this unity doesn't even mean that we all agree on every aspect of what I would call secondary doctrinal issues.

[ 9 : 03 ] Let me give you an example. When Jesus was crucified, it says He descended. Where did He go? Well, there's a big debate on that in the church. Some believe He went to hell and suffered.

Some believe He went to Hades, the good part, announced that the sacrifice, the atonement had occurred. The resurrection would soon occur and He would take them all with Him to glory.

We don't know, but we don't split churches over that. We do not split. That would be a secondary issue. Now, there's issues of the first order.

Is Jesus God in human flesh? We would divide over anyone that says no. He's just an angel or a good man or something. Those are, you know, is He virgin born?

Yes. Is He going to return? Yes, He's going to return. I believe that salvation is totally from God, apart from the outworking of man.

[ 10 : 04 ] And I believe this because man in his natural state today is described in Old and New Testament as dead, dead in trespasses and sin, and dead men can't do anything.

I mean, go run down to the funeral home and check it out and you can't do anything. There are other true believers in the church who hold to this and they have a... who do not hold to this and they have a right to be wrong.

I'm not going to question that. And then I have in my notes here, parentheses, I hope you realize this is dry humor. I had that in there. The unity spoken of by Paul is that unity energized in every true believer.

And it is energized there in spite of their denominational label. This signifies that they are controlled by a deep knowledge of the words of Christ. This deep knowledge originates in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who then energizes the believer.

Because true believers walk in the Spirit, they are able to maintain the same spiritual attitude when it comes to the essential doctrines such as, just a brief example, the substitutionary death.

[ 11 : 27 ] We hold to that. The resurrection of our Lord. We believe in that. I imagine somewhere in the world there's a church somewhere that believes, a liberal church. Well, Jesus is just dust over in the Middle East somewhere.

You know, there's no such thing as resurrection. Not even God can do that. Well, we would split with people that hold to that. Paul tells us, secondly, that true unity has a result.

It results in believers maintaining the same love. Now, most love on the human level is very emotional. Now, we have eros, which is essentially sensual love.

Eros is acceptable only within the bonds of marriage. We also have phileo, which is a bonding sort of brotherly love. It means a brotherly love.

The city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is called the city, it's phileo, Philadelphia, phileo. It's called the city of brotherly love. I've been there and it's not, I can assure you.

[ 12 : 32 ] The crime rate is off the wall. The uniting love in view here is agape love.

That is the strongest love. It is not based upon emotional attraction. It is based upon the will and it is based upon choice.

Agape love is a love so strong that an innocent person would be willing to go to a cross and die in place of his friends and even in place of his enemies.

That's the level of love we're talking about. And of course, that's what Christ did. It is a sacrificial love and that type should be very familiar with us. That is the level of love that only originates in Christ and is poured out upon us through the Spirit of God.

Paul also tells us that unity results in believers being united in Spirit. Very interesting. These three words are one word in the Greek language and it means one soul.

[ 13 : 45 ] One dash soul. S-O-U-L-E-D. That is a beautiful expression and it refers to a passionate, common commitment to the same spiritual goals.

Those united in Spirit at this level do not have to contend with personal ambition, with selfishness, with hatred, with envy, with jealousy, and other such expressions.

Those are expressions of self-love. When we are united in Spirit, we do not look inward. We look outward toward the welfare of others and the true worship of God through Christ.

Then fourthly, Paul tells us that the unity of believers results in Christians being intent on one purpose. Now, what is the one intent that Paul is speaking of here?

It is the advancement of the kingdom of God. That should be the focus of the true church, the invisible body. It is often interrupted when fleshly desires usurp a leading role in the life of a believer.

[ 14 : 52 ] We get off focus. Now, if we're trying to come up with a defining description of the age in which we live, you know, what words would we put in there?

There's one word, I think, that would undoubtedly be the most common. We live in an age of tolerance. Don't you just love that? We live in a time when anything and everything is tolerated except conservative, fundamental Christianity.

Because we live in this age, many have misunderstood the role of the church, particularly its role to be salt and light to a dying world. I heard John MacArthur do it over the lunch hour where he was talking and he said he's under condemnation because he spoke out against homosexuality.

And he said speaking out against homosexuality is the very height of love toward the homosexual. For me not to say anything and just let them die and go to hell, that's the greatest unlove there is.

So he turns the tables on all that. For instance, the church has bought into the definition of tolerant love. You're never to criticize anyone for what they believe.

[ 16 : 19 ] This has had tragic consequences in the church for several decades now. Afraid of that dreaded label. Intolerant.

Oh, that's a death sentence in a lot of churches. The church has abandoned the clear teaching of Scripture when it comes to critical doctrine and instead put forth a deliberately watered down middle of the road message that really isn't any message at all unless it's a false message.

And do not think that such positions are isolated. Man, they're rampant. You know, we get a little shielded here because we're on the buckle of the Bible belt. But you don't have to go very far.

In fact, I would have to say, Pastor, where you came from, you said there was many churches that had walked away from fundamental. True. It is rampant. It is the conservative, fundamental,

evangelical, and reformed churches that have become the targeted minority even among what used to be sister churches and are no longer.

This fear of being marked as intolerant created a vacuum in church thinking and positions on Scripture that has allowed things like these great movements, the seeker-friendly movement, the emergent church movement to sweep in.

[ 17 : 47 ] The seeker-friendly church was based on the premise that people will come and all you have to do to get them there is give them what they want. Just give them what they want. If they want more music, give them more music.

If they prefer drama or comedy instead of music, then do that. Give them drama and comedy. A lot of churches were huge on bringing in clowns.

Clowns are kind of falling on a hard time now in America, but they'd bring in clowns that generate a crowd and please such. Churches in the seeker-friendly mode have used all kinds of things to please people.

By far, the very worst I ever heard of was California. Everything bad originates in California. And they took their ten most beautiful women, I've told you this before, and they advertised they're going to do a strip tease in church this Sunday.

And they did. Now, they had clothes, a second layer of clothes. Nothing was exposed, but it was to the bump and grind of sensual music and they got a crowd.

[ 18 : 58 ] Boyd got a crowd. And MacArthur says, it's easy to get a crowd. You know, put dancing women spinning from the top of the church or he said, you could start a fight.

Advertisers are going to be a fist fight. People will come for a fight. You can get a crowd in a lot of ways, but you want to get it for the right purposes. The emergent church grew out of the seeker friendly movement.

It was basically made up of young people who didn't want anything to do with their parents' church. They were done. In this church, the Bible and preaching has little or no place.

There's advertisements. Again, California says, you'll never hear a sermon in our church. We don't use the Bible. Or if there's a sermon, we never go over seven minutes.

You know, stuff like that. The theory is that no one can know what the Bible says anyway, so why teach it to a congregation? That's the emergent theory.

[ 20 : 01 ] And don't underestimate the drawing power of these churches. Some are on the mega church level. Joel Osteen, a great example. We mentioned the Bells yesterday, and they co-pastored Mars Hill out of Michigan.

They were leaders in that emergent church movement. The Bible was out. Everything else was in. All of this led to our period in church history as being anything but united.

We have not been called to compromise with the world. And part of that definition is the worldly church. We have been called by Jude, writing the words of the Holy Spirit, to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

And this is why we can say there is a truth war that is waging all around us on every side and most churches are not even aware of that. They don't realize that we're in a spiritual battle for our very lives and the very souls of our children and grandchildren.

The very souls. Let me say something that is intolerant. A true church cannot unite with those who deny the essential truths of the gospel.

[ 21 : 31 ] We don't have any commonality. We don't have any fellowship. They can come and listen and be silent. You know, I tell people all the time, I like that verse that says women should be silent in church.

And then I add, and so should most men. There's only two guys that should say anything on church. Dan when he sings and you when you preach. It's not a free for all.

Listen to John in his second epistle. for many deceivers have gone out into the world. Those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh.

This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God. The one who abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

[ 22 : 36 ] If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house and do not give him a greeting for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil

deeds.

Now, hand in glove to that is the true church cannot affirm a false gospel. We can't do that. Paul, of course, was the great champion of that. Galatians chapter 1. I'm amazed. And I'm told in Greek that's an amazing word. I'm astounded.

I'm speechless. I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, which is really not another, although there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed.

[ 23 : 45 ] Now, to add emphasis, the Holy Spirit has Paul write this down. As we have said before, so I say now again, if any man has preached to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed.

That's the word anathema, meaning the eternally damned of God. And Paul was equally clear in his second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 6, starting in verse 14, do not be bound together with unbelievers for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness or what fellowship has light with darkness or what harmony has Christ with Belial or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever.

Now, does that mean we find an unbeliever and we say get out of my presence and shun him? No, we share the gospel with him. We tell him about the Lord, but we don't compromise. Say, well, okay, I hear what you're saying too.

No. True unity is found only among true followers of Christ. Now, we're going to see over the next few lessons that true unity was very much at the heart of the Lord as he prays to the Father.

He's praying for the unity of the body of Christ. He closes this magnificent prayer with an appeal for unity among his followers. He has prayed that his own rightful glory would be restored to him.

[ 25 : 17 ] He has prayed for his disciples who were alive at the moment he was interceding on earth for them and now he has expanded this prayer into the third part to encompass all who would believe in him in the future down to the 21st century.

He prays for those who would come to him through the power of the word, the witness of the disciples, the sacrifice of the cross and the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God.

He first prays that all believers would be united in him in truth. That is extremely important to us as we must endure and fight the battles because there is a war on truth.

It's a war out there. Jude saw it. The half brother of Jesus. And a little 27 verse of Jude, he wrote about it.

It's a great book. Great book. Thank you.