

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-17-13 AM NOTES
"THE REAL LORD'S PRAYER" (PART 6)
JOHN 17:20-26
#71 in Series, "Verse-by-Verse Through John"

Romans 8:32 (NKJV) "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

2 Corinthians 9:15 (NKJV) "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

John 6:37 (NKJV) "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

John 10:29 (NKJV) "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand."

John 17:6 (NKJV) "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

John 17:9 (NKJV) "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours."

John 17:11b (NKJV) "...keep through Your name those whom You have given Me..."

John 17:12b (NKJV) "Those whom You gave Me I have kept..."

John 17:24a (NKJV) "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am..."

I. The Unity Our Lord Seeks (vv. 20-21, 23)

"Bible history and church history bear record to the sad fact that believers do not always get along with each other. Even our Lord's disciples argued with each other, and Jesus was right there with them! Paul and Barnabas had a falling out over John Mark, and some of the New Testament churches broke Paul's heart with their disputes and divisions. Spiritual unity is a rare commodity. No wonder our Lord included it in His prayer for His church."

—Warren Weirsbe

"Whoever cites John 17 to justify a unity that embraces believer and apostate, disciple and renegade, regenerate and unregenerate, abuses this passage. Such ecumenism [bringing disagreeing groups together] has its roots not in Scripture, but in misguided (if well-intentioned) notions of what New Testament Christianity is all about."

—D. A. Carson

A. The Start of True Unity (v. 20)

B. The Standard of True Unity (vv. 21a, 23a)

1 Corinthians 12:13a (NKJV) "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body..."

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NKJV) "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*"

Ephesians 4:3 (NKJV) "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

1. There Is a Unity of Motive

Psalms 50:21 (NKJV) “These *things* you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; *but* I will rebuke you, and set *them* in order before your eyes.”

2. There Is a Unity in Mission

2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (NKJV) “¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

3. There Is Unity in Truth

C. The Significance of True Unity (V21b, 23b)

John 13:35 (NKJV) “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

II. The Glory Our Lord Seeks (vv. 22, 24)

A. The Glory Christ Gives to Those the Father Has Given to Him (v. 22)

1 Peter 4:14 (NKJV) “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.”

Colossians 1:27b (NKJV) “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

B. The Glory Christ Had Before the Incarnation (v. 24)

“Do you know why the righteous die? Shall I tell you what kills them? It is Christ’s prayer in this verse. It is that which fetches them up to heaven. They would stop here, if Christ did not pray them to death.”

—Charles Spurgeon

III. The Love Our Lord Reveals (vv. 23c, 25, 26)

*So dear, so very dear to God,
Dearer I could not be.
The love wherewith He loved His Son,
Such is His love to me.*

—Anonymous

Romans 5:5 (NKJV) “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

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Allow me to repeat something that I said a few weeks ago. We often rejoice (and rightfully so) in the fact that God has given us the gift of His Son to pay the sin debt that we owe. **Romans 8:32 (NKJV)** “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Our hearts overflow with gratitude for this gift. In **2 Corinthians 9:15 (NKJV)** we read of Christ as God’s gift to us: “Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift!” Isn’t that a great word for the gift of God’s Son – a gift so wonderful that it is beyond description? In the Gospel of John we see a complimentary truth. In John we see also that those who are saved are God’s gift to His Son! Over and over Jesus describes His disciples as those whom the Father has given Him. **John 6:37 (NKJV)** “**All that the Father gives Me** will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.” **John 10:29 (NKJV)** “My Father, **who has given them to Me**, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.” **John 17:6 (NKJV)** “I have manifested Your name to **the men whom You have given Me** out of the world. They were Yours, **You gave them to Me**, and they have kept Your word.” **John 17:9 (NKJV)** “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for **those whom You have given Me**, for they are Yours.” **John 17:11b (NKJV)** “...keep through Your name **those whom You have given Me...**” **John 17:12b (NKJV)** “**Those whom You gave Me** I have kept...” **John 17:24a (NKJV)** “Father, I desire that **they also whom You gave Me** may be with Me where I am...” The subjects of this prayer our Lord Jesus prayed to the Father are those whom the Father has given Him. In the last seven verses of this prayer, Jesus prays for three things.

I. The Unity Our Lord Seeks (V20-23)

Jesus has alluded to unity earlier in this prayer, but now it becomes the burden of His prayer. When you begin to study church history, you discover that the church has always struggled with unity. Warren Weirsbe said, “Bible history and church history bear record to the sad fact that believers do not always get along with each other. Even our Lord’s disciples argued with each other, and Jesus was right there with them! Paul and Barnabas had a falling out over John Mark, and some of the New Testament churches broke Paul’s heart with their disputes and divisions. Spiritual unity is a rare commodity. No wonder our Lord included it in His prayer for His church.” [Warren Weirsbe, *The Intercessory Prayer of Jesus*, Page 120].

While unity is a prominent theme in the New Testament, it is often misunderstood. There are two kinds of unity. First, there is **organizational unity**. Organizational unity involves documents that are agreed on and signed, flow charts and formal signed agreements. This kind of unity normally involves two or more groups that were divided into separate organizations sometime in the past. They then begin to hold formal talks about coming back together. To do that, they must compromise on the issues that they split over in the first place. Each side makes compromises perhaps in the area of church polity (government) and even doctrines until a document is agreed on that can be signed by the leaders of the two or more groups. When this happens, it usually get’s a lot of attention in the world’s media and everyone says nice things about it and verses about unity are always quoted as having been obeyed by this organizational unity. Organizational unity is NEVER what the New Testament is referring to when it talks about unity. The second kind of unity is **spiritual unity**. This is the kind of unity referred to in the New Testament and the kind of unity for which Jesus is praying for His disciples. This spiritual unity is a rare thing in this fallen world and cannot be brought about by formal documents and organizational flow charts. This kind of unity is supernaturally enabled by God and is never the product of man’s fleshly efforts. D. A. Carson summarizes it well when he says: “Whoever cites John 17 to justify a unity that embraces believer and apostate, disciple and renegade, regenerate and unregenerate, abuses this passage. Such ecumenism [bringing disagreeing groups together] has its roots not in Scripture but in misguided (if well-intentioned)

notions of what New Testament Christianity is all about” [D. A. Carson, “The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus”, Page 203-204]. Spiritual unity is something God does in the hearts of born again people that can never be organized and never involves compromising fundamental Biblical truths. It has nothing to do with denominations coming together after they have compromised their doctrines. What does this spiritual unity look like? How is this unity achieved? What robs us of this unity? Let’s look at this passage and see the answers.

A. The Start of True Unity (V20)

Jesus was not just praying for the eleven disciples who along with Paul would become the original apostles who built the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20). He was also praying for us. While some of the verses prior to verse 20 were speaking of the eleven, verse 20 also refers back to what Jesus prays for His disciples even up through today. Every person saved from the time of Christ on was saved when they heard the Gospel from the New Testament and responded with repentance and then savingly believed the Gospel and trusted in Christ alone to save them. The entire New Testament was written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by an apostle or a close associate of an apostle. Those of us who are saved have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ through the inspired words of the apostles whom Jesus called. If you are truly a Christian, you could substitute your name in verse 20: “I pray also for Phil, Tom, Jason, Sally, Angela, Bill, etc, who will believe on me through their word.” You can fill in the names of people from every tongue, every tribe, and every people group! You could fill in the name Saeed Abedini, the Iranian born American citizen who has been sentenced to 8 years in a notorious Iranian prison for disturbing notional security by planting house churches in Iran. If you are saved, Jesus was praying for you almost 2000 years ago. True salvation is the start, the beginning place for genuine unity. True unity is only possible between those who have repented of sin and savingly believed in Jesus Christ. Why do I add that word “savingly” to “believed”? The phrase “to savingly believe” is one the Christians of long ago often used to distinguish mere mental assent to historical facts from Biblical belief that trusts completely in and relies totally on the price Jesus paid on the cross. To savingly believe is to receive Jesus Christ not only as our substitute, but also as Lord and master. The result of that receiving Him as Savior, Lord, and Master is that the one believing becomes a new creation in Christ with old things having passed away and all things become new. Unity cannot be between wheat and tares (to use terms from Jesus’ parable of the soils). The starting point of biblical unity is that those unified must have savingly believed on Jesus.

B. The Standard of True Unity (V21a, 23a)

There is a sense that all who have savingly believed on Jesus Christ among every tongue, tribe, and people group are already one. Some have called this “positional unity”. In one sense, Jesus’ prayer in verse 21 [that His believing disciples would be one] has already been answered. Follow me before you reject that. The answer to this prayer began when on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to indwell those who had savingly believed in Jesus and baptized true believers into union with Christ, making them a part of Christ’s body. Everyone saved today is immediately baptized into the body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:13a (NKJV)** “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...” This unity believers have in Christ is detailed in **Ephesians 4:4-6 (NKJV)** “⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.” Look at the unity that is ours in Christ:

- One body – That is the body of Christ, the true church
- One Spirit – The one Holy Spirit baptizes all who savingly believe into Christ
- One hope – That hope includes all that God has promised and prepared for us with Him through eternity
- One Lord – Jesus Christ is the head of the body
- One faith – This refers to the body of doctrine revealed in the New Testament; Jude calls it in Jude verse 3, “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”
- One baptism – Not referring to water baptism but the baptism by the Holy Spirit into union with Christ
- One God and Father of all – All saved people have God as their Father

Our task is not to achieve unity between professing Christians some of whom are saved and some likely are not, but to keep the unity we have between true believers in Christ. Our command in regard to unity is detailed in **Ephesians 4:3 (NKJV)** “endeavoring to **keep the unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” This keeping the unity has been called “practical unity”. True Christians have unity. We have a common experience of grace, a common object of faith, a common destination for eternity, and a common love for the Father that rules out a love for the world (1 John 2:15). The task we must focus on is to keep that unity in the nitty-gritty grind and challenges of the daily lives of very diverse believers who are at all levels of maturity. It is tough when we have different backgrounds, different personalities, different passions, different leadership styles, different tastes in music and preaching styles, and so much more! It is a supernatural task when it comes to differences in secondary doctrines that are not fundamental to the faith (that is they are not essential to salvation). Again, this unity Jesus prays for does not mean that denominations get together to form one organization. That was pretty much the case in the middle ages before the Protestant Reformation. While there were various underground groups who held to the truth, there was only one “denomination”, one ecclesiastical body, but there was anything but true unity. Those days were not called “The Dark Ages” for nothing. It was a time of corruption, false doctrine, superstition, and ineffectiveness in that one big cumbersome ecclesiastical body.

I think that the primary application of this unity Jesus prayed for is in the local church. Some people are out there trying to get the denominations together when we can’t even get individual churches together! Someone has suggested that we change the words to some of the songs we sing, such as: “The strife is o’er, the battle done; the church has split and our side won.” Someone else came up with an often quoted poem:

To live above with those we love,

That will be glory.

To live below with those we know,

Now that’s a different story!

This practical unity that is the outcome of positional unity can be pictured as a huge cone. Picture Jesus at the top of the cone. As every Christian climbs up the cone to get nearer and nearer to Jesus, the result is that they get closer and closer to one another.

Notice the standard for the unity that Jesus speaks of. The standard of the unity that Christ is praying for us is the unity between God the Father and God the Son. Let’s think for a moment about the unity between the Father and the Son.

1. There is a unity of motive – The ultimate motive of the Father and the Son is that they receive the glory they are due. The ultimate motive of God is His glory! If that sounds egotistical and self-serving to you it is because you are making God like man. **Psalms 50:21 (NKJV)** “These *things* you have done, and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you; *but* I will rebuke you, and set *them* in order before your eyes.” For any man to have as his motive his own glory, would indeed be egotistical and self-serving, but God is worthy of all glory. For God to give or desire glory go to another would mean that there is another greater than Him and that one doesn’t exist. When our motives are boiled down to one – the glory of God the Father and God the Son – there will be unity.

2. There is a unity in mission – The mission of Father and Son is the justification, sanctification, and glorification of those the Father has given as a love gift to the Son. There is no tension between the members of the Godhead. Some people make it sound like God the Son loved us and died for us and the Father would like to zap us, but Jesus stands between us and God’s wrath that He longs to pour out on all of us. The fact is that Jesus took that wrath on the cross and it was the Father who sent and gave His Son for the propitiation (satisfaction) of our sin. **2 Corinthians 5:19b (NKJV)** “**..God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself...**” When we are united in the mission of going into all the world with the message of reconciliation, to proclaim the gospel to every creature, making disciples of every people group, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things that He has commanded them, we will move toward this unity that Jesus longed for.

3. There is unity in truth – All truth has its origin in the Godhead and since the Scriptures were breathed out by God they are in their entirety God’s truth. There is no discord in the Trinity over truth. As we zero in on the Scriptures as our “truth standard” there will be unity around the truth. We of course have what the Bible calls the flesh which includes our old programming and our interpretation of some passages may differ, but they should never differ on the essentials of the faith. Unity must never come at the expense of compromising God’s truth.

C. The Significance of True Unity (V21b, 23b)

The significance of true unity as it affects the world is that our accomplishment of the mission is enhanced instead of handicapped. The unity between true believers screams out to the world, “Something supernatural is going on here”. In contrast, nothing turns off the world as much as Christians who fight and churches filled with strife. The world doesn’t evaluate us on our doctrine; they don’t understand doctrine. They evaluate us on our love for one another and the unity that flows from that love. Jesus said in **John 13:35 (NKJV)** “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

II. The Glory Our Lord Seeks (V22, 24)

A. The Glory Christ Gives to Those the Father Has Given to Him (V22)

There is a lot of disagreement among good Bible scholars as to the meaning of this verse so I am not being dogmatic as to its interpretation. I think Jesus is referring to the time just a few weeks later when He would send His Spirit to indwell believers. All through this prayer, He has prayed as though the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension were already done. In His mind the sending of the Holy Spirit is already done even though it is a few weeks away in time. Jesus here in verse 22 seems to be praying for us as we receive this one who is called “the Spirit of glory” (1 Peter 4:14). Paul would write later of this Spirit of Christ who indwells us in **Colossians 1:27b (NKJV)** “...Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Our hope of glory is not really in ourselves, but Christ in us, the Spirit of glory.

B. The Glory Christ Had before the Incarnation (V24)

Listen to what Charles Spurgeon said about this verse: “Do you know why the righteous die? Shall I tell you what kills them? It is Christ’s prayer in this verse. It is that which fetches them up to heaven. They would stop here, if Christ did not pray them to death” [Spurgeon Quote Book, Page 305]. Jesus is praying that when these whom the Father has given Him have finished their race, fulfilled their part in the mission that they could come to be where He is and behold the glory that He had before He emptied Himself and took on flesh to come on a dying, reconciling, wrath satisfying, devil defeating mission to earth. Our problem is that we have tried to turn earth into a substitute for heaven – for going to be with Him where He is to behold His glory. For most Americans, going to be with Jesus is just an interruption in our busy schedules and something that gets in the way of our accumulating more and more here. When you look at those going through trials and tribulation, they long to see Jesus’ prayer answered. I long to see Him in all of His glory.

III. The Love Our Lord Reveals (V23c, 25, 26)

Jesus is praying that we would know – really know by experience – the love that the Father has for us. That last part of verse 23 is absolutely astounding! It is saying that the Father loves those whom He has given to the Son with the same measure of love with which He loves His only begotten Son. It is an infinite, eternal, perfect love. An unknown poet wrote these words:

So dear, so very dear to God,

Dearer I could not be.

The love wherewith He loved His Son,

Such is His love to me.

In verse 26, He prays that this love of the Father may be in us, that we may be saturated and overflowing with the realization of this love. We are not to be depositories of this divine love that is in us; we are to be channels of this love to a love thirsty world. **Romans 5:5 (NKJV)** “Now hope does not

disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” That phrase “poured out” means to inundate and even to overflow. That love becomes the source of loving our spouse, our neighbor, and even our enemy.

CONCLUSION

I feel I have done a very inadequate job of proclaiming and explaining this great chapter to you. Read it often and allow the Holy Spirit to encourage you. You are being prayed for – prayed for by the very Son of God. You can therefore face the future without fear.