

"That They May Be One"

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Scripture Lesson:-

Text:- St. John 17: 11. "And now, I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are."

Conclusion:- The desires of Jesus to have been mixed with his fears-that is, if Jesus ever knew fear. On those nights spent on the mountainside did he wonder, "What kind of kingdom can be built by Peter the impulsive; James and John, the selfish, ambitious; by Thomas, the doubter?" Jesus had managed to keep these men under control while he walked with them, but what would happen when he was taken away? Now you begin to see why Jesus prayed for his followers and especially for the unity of his followers, for certainly they had not always lived in unity. They had argued about such things as who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The greediness of Judas must have caused Jesus considerable worry and difficulty. Peter was a redeemed man, but so, even before Pentecost he was weak, impulsive, hotheaded. He could jump out of a boat to walk on the waves in a great surge of faith; or he could draw a sword and cut off a man's ear. Then there was Matthew. The Jewish element could hardly forget that Matthew had been a publican for years. His past would still be held against him. Even some of the group of disciples may have harbored grudging memories against him. It is no wonder that Jesus prayed for the unity of his followers.

I.

Soon would come the problem of unity between Jew and Greek as Christians. Roman and Jew would have to forget their centuries long feuds if they were to move forward together in the church. Did Jesus foresee what would happen in the church within thirty years after his crucifixion? It was during

that period Paul the beloved apostle was to write to the church in Corinth, "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by those which are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you!" The Corinthian Church was to suffer division--division over preachers. One was to boast that he had been baptized by Apollos, another that he calimed Peter as his favotite. Let me quote again from Paul's first letter to the Corinthian Church, "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you;;;and are puffed up::: your glorying is not good. Behold now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extirtioner; with such an one not to eat." Further on in the book Paul complained because the saints were going to lay against each other. Add to this the judgment of the Holy Spirit with regard to the seven Churches of Asia as recorded in the book of Revelation. Six of these seven churches certainly needed a prayer offered in their behalf, a prayer for a holy life and unity.

## II.

That is why Jesus' fears were not alone for his disciples. You will remember that he said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word---that they may all be one." That part of the prayer was for you and for me. His prayer was for unity of all the true children of God, all Christians. It was not merely for the unity of our own group, or the unity among Christians of obe section, one nationality, one race, or one level of intellectual accomplishment. His prayer was for unity among all converted people.

## III.

Christian unity is Christian good will in action and spirit. It is brotherly love in action. It is

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## III.

Christian unity is Christian good will in action and spirit. It is brotherly love in action. It is

the assertion of an unselfish life. "Love seeketh not her own". I am afraid of the person who will not extend the hand of fellowship and unity to all converted Christians. I am afraid of the man who is so holy he feels he would be defiled by partaking of the Lord's supper in company with someone who differs with him on some none essential theological belief. There are several enemies of Christian unity, but the chief of these is religious conceit. The possessors of such attitudes are generally lacking in intelligence or in vital Christian exoerience.

#### IV.

There is a basis in Christ for unity between believers regardless of their station in life, their nationality, or their intellectual achievement. Some years ago in a prominent eastern church three persons dedicated themselves in the same service to be used in the kingdom of God. One was Charles Evans Hughes, chief justice of the supreme court of the U. S. Another was a Chinese, and the third was a washerwoman. As these three bowed themselves before the altar of the church, the minister commented, "My friends, I will have you to notice that at the cross of Christ the ground is level."

Every Christian needs to remember this. Before the cross the ground is level. We do not stand above our brother; we stand by his side. One of the great hindrances to Christian unity is the man who thinks he is so much better than other people in the church.

Of course, the unconverted person is not justified in using this as an alibi. Many times I have heard people say, "No. I do not go to church. I don't get anything out of it when I go." It is a selfish man who speaks thus. He is seeking to receive rather than give. How long would the branch live when it is detached from the vine. How long will a man thrive spiritually when he separates himself from the church.

When you buy a railroad ticket you will find on it these two words. "Not good if detached". Every Christian man or woman has that same mes-

sage written on his Charter of salvation. "Not good if detached". The body of Christ is not composed of independent members scattered to the four winds but is rather a co-ordinated organism where hand and foot, eye and brain all function together to do the will of God.

Conclusion:- Do you and I fit into Christ's scheme for Christian unity. Are we holding the right attitudes, attitudes that will help answer Christ's prayer? Are we waiting for all of Christendom to come to us, or do we ask others only to come to truth, promising to meet them there? Do we reach out our hand in fellowship to every blood-washed one? Christ prayer that we all may be one. It is a sign not to live so as to help answer that prayer.

The church is not a collection of individuals but a living organism. It is the body of Christ, and as such it must be co-ordinated and unified. We must not be like the branches of a tree which are scattered to the four winds, but we must be like the members of a body which are joined together and function together. We must be like the stones of a building which are joined together and form a solid structure. We must be like the members of a team which are joined together and work together for a common purpose. We must be like the members of a family which are joined together and love one another. We must be like the members of a church which are joined together and seek to glorify God together.

Every Christian who is a member of the church should be a member of the body. We should not be like the branches of a tree which are scattered to the four winds, but we should be like the members of a body which are joined together and function together. We should not be like the stones of a building which are scattered to the four winds, but we should be like the stones of a building which are joined together and form a solid structure. We should not be like the members of a team which are scattered to the four winds, but we should be like the members of a team which are joined together and work together for a common purpose. We should not be like the members of a family which are scattered to the four winds, but we should be like the members of a family which are joined together and love one another. We should not be like the members of a church which are scattered to the four winds, but we should be like the members of a church which are joined together and seek to glorify God together.

In order to be a member of the church, we must be a member of the body. We must be like the members of a body which are joined together and function together. We must be like the stones of a building which are joined together and form a solid structure. We must be like the members of a team which are joined together and work together for a common purpose. We must be like the members of a family which are joined together and love one another. We must be like the members of a church which are joined together and seek to glorify God together.

When you buy a rubber stamp you will find it is not a rubber stamp but a piece of wood with a rubber stamp on it. Similarly, when you buy a church you will find it is not a church but a collection of people who are scattered to the four winds. We must be like the members of a church which are joined together and seek to glorify God together.