

Jesus Prays For Unity

by Guy Roberson

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:20-21)

Jesus was about to surrender Himself to be crucified for humanity but before doing so He prayed to His Father for His disciples, including the saved of all generations. He prayed that God would keep His disciples safe from Satan’s power and that He would unite them through His truth as spoken by the apostles as we can see from John 17:20. Our Lord’s great desire for His disciples was that they would become one even as He and the Father are one. Through this wonderful unity the world would come to believe that the Father sent the Son. In answering the question of how the believers’ unity could effect the conversion of the world, Milligan said, “this would be to all thoughtful persons a moral demonstration that the Christian religion is not of men, but of God [Robert Milligan, *Analysis of the New Testament* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Bosworth, Chase, and Hall, 1874), p. 268]. When division is promoted among the professed followers of Christ this great truth is being hindered.

When Jesus said that we are to be united through the word of the apostles this was not simply an incidental thought. Peter wrote: *“that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior”* (2 Pet. 3:2). These words are equivalent to saying that there is no other way of producing unity among God’s people than through the word spoken by the apostles which we have in the New Testament. It is in division the Lord’s church is most helpless. By multiplying divisions through all of the conflicting doctrines of the professed followers of Christ Satan has hindered untold numbers from obeying the gospel.

Modern “Christendom” is terribly divided into many different churches. Each denomination has practices that contradict and disagree with the practices of the other denominations. For example one believes that faith is generated by the Scriptures and another believes that faith is supernaturally bestowed. One believes that only immersion is true baptism while others believe that sprinkling is permissible. One believes that a child of God can fall from grace and be lost, while another says that a born again child of God cannot be lost. There are differences in worship, organization and names by which each one is identified. Religious leaders have claimed that the denominations are all part of the universal church in spite of contradicting each other. A very serious question is in order concerning all of this division. Is this how Jesus and His Father are one as Jesus prayed in John 17:20-21? When did they ever disagree about how one should be saved? Or, how their children should worship? Or, which church to be a member of? Or, if a child of theirs could fall from grace? It is clear that they taught the same commandments because Jesus said: *“For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak”* (John 12:49-50).

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