

PART SIXTH—UNITY

INTRODUCTION: Five lessons are devoted to the study of the important theme of unity. It is of supreme importance because demanded by the Lord. The basis upon which it is to be accomplished has been given and is the only plan or platform that meets God's approval. Division in the religious world at large, or in the congregation, is condemned as contrary to the Spirit and will of our Lord and destructive to the Church and the souls of men. Unity must become the prayer and effort of the individual who would be pleasing unto God.

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LESSON XXIII—THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY

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I. Christ Prayed For Unity: (Jn. 17:20, 21).

1. The scope of the prayer: "Neither for these (apostles) only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me." All believers are included in its scope.
2. Its object: "That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us."
3. Its ultimate effect: "that the world may believe that Thou didst send me."
4. Implication: That religious division and denominationalism produces infidelity; and that unity among believers is the effective weapon against infidelity and atheism.
5. Application: Let no man thank God that there are so many Churches, unless he is thankful that the prayer of Christ has not been answered. Those who respect the will of the Lord should promote UNITY and refuse to foster or further denominationalism or division of any sort among believers in Christ.

II. Unity Demanded at Corinth by Paul: (I Cor. 1:10).

1. The condition: "For it hath been signified unto me that there are contentions among you" (v. 11). "Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I am of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (v. 12). Compare this picture with the religious world today.
2. The demand: "That there be no divisions among you."
 - a. The Lord recognizes no cause for division as just, except truth. Peace must not be bought at the expense of truth sacrificed or compromised (Matt. 10:34-39).
3. The authority: "Through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."
4. The method: "That ye all speak the same thing." God's word is the only basis for Unity.
5. The fruit: "That ye be perfected together in the same mind and the same judgment."

6. Arguments against sects and divisions:
 - a. Division is carnal (I Cor. 3:1-3).
 - b. Division destroys the temple (I Cor. 3:16-17).
 - c. Christ is not divided (I Cor. 1:16).
 - d. Wearing other names while attempting to serve Christ dishonors Him (I Cor. 1:13, 14).
7. Such Unity as was demanded of the Corinthians is demanded of us today. Division is still wrong and a dishonor to Christ.

Conclusion: From those two passages we conclude: (1) that those who foster and promote denominationalism and religious division prevent the fulfillment of the Lord's prayer and, (2) are a dishonor to the Lord.

Questions For Discussion

1. For what did Jesus so earnestly pray?
2. What was the extent of the unity for which His prayed?
3. Give the implication and application of his prayer for unity.
4. What is a common petition included in the prayer of the denominational leaders?
5. What did Paul command and exhort the Corinthians?
6. What is the force of the word "beseech?"
7. Who authorized unity among the believers in Christ?
8. How is unity to be secured and maintained?
9. Give Paul's argument against sects and divisions.
10. How does division make void the Lord's prayer?