

Series: John

Title: That They All May Be One

Text: John 17: 21-23

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Place: SGBC, NJ

Proposition: In John 17, Christ intercedes for his people to be born again through the preaching of the gospel, sanctified unto him in faith, and kept from the evil, for this purpose—*that they all may be one.*

John 17: 20: Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; **21:** That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. **22:** And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: **23:** I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

This oneness is not ecumenical union between various denominations in this world. They have been trying this for centuries. The Catholic church tried it. Protestants tried it. The church of England tried it. The puritans tried it. Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists all have tried it in the past and still today. It never has succeeded and it never will. They are not one spiritually so they will not be one. They are not in agreement on who God is. They are not in agreement on who Christ is, what he did, what he is doing now.

Man cannot make this oneness. This is an invisible tie. This is the work of God our Father alone, of Christ our Head alone, of the Spirit of God alone. He must get the glory for this oneness. Christ is praying for his true church, the true members of his body, the spiritual church—his people—those the Father gave unto him. In verse 9, 20 *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine...Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.”*

They are those Christ called out from Abel to his apostles to those he has called out since to those he shall yet call out until the last one. They are those Christ laid down his life for. They are those Christ gives eternal life and intercedes to be sanctified unto him and kept. This is a mystical union between those born of the same Spirit given the same faith with the same love for Christ and same love for Christ’s people. Not one of Christ’s elect, redeemed people are left out of this petition, verse twenty-one, *“That they ALL may be one.”* Christ keeps speaking of this oneness. Back in 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.”*

This union is not a mere agreement of a denomination, not consent to man-made creed, not even the bond of a visible church. It is the spiritual union made by the triune God. Its nature is like its origin: eternal. When every earthly tie is broken, this union will remain.

ONE IN ONE

John 17: 21: That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: **22:**... that they may be one, even as we are one: **23:** I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;

This oneness is in God our Father and his Son with God our Father in Christ and Christ in his people. God the Father is in Christ Jesus and Christ is in the Father. They are one. *“As thou Father are in me and I in thee.”* This is an amazing, spiritual, inseparable union, *“that they may be one, even as we are one.”* This makes our perfection to be in Christ, *“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.”*

God made the human body to represent this oneness. Here I stand with one head and many members but the head and the members make up one body. My head is one with the members and the members with my head so it is one body. So is Christ.

1 Corinthians 12: 12: For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. 13: For by one Spirit are we all baptized into

one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14: For the body is not one member, but many. 15: If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16: And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17: If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling? 18: But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19: And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? 20: But now *are they* many members, yet but one body. 21: And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22: Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23: And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness. 24: For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked: 25: That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. 26: And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27: Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

HOW DO WE HAVE THIS UNION?

John 17: 22: And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

Not long ago I preached a message showing this glory Christ gave us is his righteousness. Romans 3 says “we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.” In the context, Romans 3:21-23 declares “the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by the faith of Christ.” God the Father gave Christ the glory of working out this righteousness for his people—of being our Righteousness. Christ said, “*I have given it them the glory thou gave to me.*” The Father gave Christ the glory of being the Righteousness of his people, of making us righteous by his righteousness. Romans 3 says his righteousness is “*unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*”

It is Christ giving us his righteousness—his glory—that makes his people one. It is the Spirit of God making us know we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. It is knowing we were guilty sinners and still are sinners in our sin-nature. God keeps us one by keeping us broken and contrite in heart showing us our own sin and shortcomings. But it is Christ giving us his righteousness that makes us one. We have nothing to boast of, nothing to exalt ourselves over one another about. We are sinners saved by another’s righteousness which is given to us freely by grace.

Isn’t that how Ephesians 2 says Christ made his elect Jew and Gentile one? It was by Christ who fulfilled the law and made his people righteous.

Ephesians 2: 14: For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man so making peace; 16: and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby 17: And he came and preached peace to us which were far off and to them which were nigh 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19: Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20: And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Christ gives his people his glory—his righteousness—by giving us the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is called “the spirit of glory” in 1 Peter 4:14.

Christ has brought us into the glory of the new covenant of grace. The Holy Spirit of glory brought us out from the glory of the old covenant curse into the glory of the new everlasting covenant of grace. Remember in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul said the old covenant law that slew us, that ministered death to us, had its glory, shown by Moses face shining when he came down out of the mount.

But the covenant that remains has more glory. The Holy Spirit brought us into the glory of the new everlasting of grace. Remember how Stephens face shined like an angel as he preached Christ to those who stoned him? He preached Christ, the glory of this new covenant. It is the Spirit of glory that makes us know we are righteous by Christ and brings us into the glory of the new covenant.

2 Corinthians 3:18: But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory,[from the glory of the old to the glory of the new] *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Christ prayed in John 17, saying, 22: *Father the glory thou gavest me, I have given them that they may be one as we are one; 23: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.* Christ keeps his people one—by reminding us we are still sinners in ourselves—we cannot think more highly of ourselves than we ought. When brother or sister offends us, we may go awhile, but if we are his, eventually, Christ reminds us of the offenses by which we offended God, yet he has forgiven us for Christ’s sake. Our oneness is that we are equally one in Christ’s righteousness alone, by the same Holy Spirit, in the same holy covenant, in the same household. Paul called it “*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*”

Ephesians 4: 4: There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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. 7: But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

On purpose, Christ gave unto every one of us grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Believers differ widely in grace and gifts with very different measures given by Christ. This makes us depend on Christ for oneness and makes us know our oneness is only by Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:4: Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5: And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6: And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7: But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

So we have to all look to Christ and remind each other of what we have in Christ and do so, “*With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph 4: 2-3). God will keep unity with his true saints. He will continue to renew us and show us Christ is our only Righteousness and Holiness. By this he breaks our hearts and humble us so that we continue united. We endeavor to keep unity but it is Christ who keeps us united.

When you love the baby nothing is worth cutting the baby into.

If someone goes out then we start thinking, “Well, the church won’t receive me back again. This one is against me, that one is against me.” That is a combination of our sin-nature and the devil trying to keep us from uniting with our brethren under the preaching of the gospel of Christ. We build up this idea in our minds of how we will be rejected. Then when we go to the Lord’s house we find it is nothing like we imagined. The Lord’s people receive you and are delighted you are there because they love you.

Brethren forgive brethren because we see our sin-against God and how he has forgiven us for Christ’s sake. He makes us cast off the pride, enmity, envy, bitterness that we might continue as brethren who will spend eternity as one.

THE REASON FOR ONENESS

John 17: 21:... that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me... 23: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

The reason Christ makes his people one is so that Christ uses us to preach his gospel. This is how God ordained to call out his lost sheep making them one with us. The oneness Christ creates in his true members is for the preaching of the gospel of Christ, through which he calls his people out of the world. He uses those he has already made one, to have one mind, one purpose, one goal to preach Christ giving Christ all the glory. And through his gospel, Christ calls his people out of the world, make them one with

he and the Father and with us through the Spirit. He makes his elect from all over the world know that God has loved them as he loved Christ. What an amazing statement!

In the end, when Christ's body is complete in the full measure of the stature of Christ, then the whole unregenerate world will know that Jesus is the Christ sent of God and they will all bow the knee. But they will not believe savingly.

Picture a war zone—Ukraine or Europe during WW2. Bombs falling, bullets whizzing, soldier against soldier. In the midst of it, a building is being erected. The war is raging all about but there is the foundation laid. These various armies are in a fierce battle, all the while a stone is laid then another, the walls are coming up. A bomb explodes within a few feet yet the builders keep building until the last stone is added and the building is complete. There it stands complete. Suddenly the bombs and bullets cease and every one looks up and sees this majestic building. All over the world on every news station everyone looks and beholds this building with all the stones united, joined together, as one glorious building.

That is what our Lord is doing with us as he preaches the gospel through us. While the world battles one another round about, the Lord is building his church, uniting living stone with living stone. When the last one is added then the building will be complete. "He will bring the headstone shouting grace grace unto it." Every stone will be united. Then new Jerusalem shall come down and every enemy shall cease fighting and look up and behold what Christ did in their midst with his people while the potsherd were busy striving with potsherd.

Then all Christ's elect scattered throughout the world shall be one perfectly and shall know Christ perfectly and shall know perfectly that "*that the Father, hast loved us, as he hast loved Christ.*"

John 14:20: At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

Ephesians 1: 8: Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9: Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together IN ONE all things IN CHRIST, [his saints] both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: 11: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Amen!