

Unity Accomplished John 17:20-25 JL-108
Sunday, December 3, 2006

*Third section of **Jesus' high priestly prayer***

whereby Jesus now **clearly** begins to pray for the church as a whole –
present and future.

His dominant concern is for our **unity** and expression of **divine glory**

John 17:20-23

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 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. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 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.

Jesus *prays* - ἐρωτῶ - a Greek word used **not** of a subservient asking his master,
but of **an equal with the one**
to whom he is *making the request*.

He prays specifically for - ΠΙΣΤΕΥΟΝΤΩΝ -
*those who will be **believing** ...*

not for *anyone* who makes a mere **profession**,
but **the participle mood** is used to **express a continual belief**,
one that differs from the non-saving belief
that we have seen often expressed by the **multitude**
of people in John's Gospel.

Christ *prays here* for those who are *disciples indeed* –
exactly as He said earlier,
he **does not pray for the world**.
but those given Him by the Father ...

vs. 20

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall be believing on me through their word;

Three times in this prayer, Jesus references Thy Word – the Word of the Father ...

1) Jhn 17:6

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

2) Jhn 17:14

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

3) Jhn 17:17

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Now in vs. 20 Jesus refers to *their word* ...

By virtue of “Jesus’ own” being set apart by God, sanctified in the truth, and sent into the world ...

the Word of the Father, becomes now their word –

Not that the content has changed ... but the testimony and witness of that content is now the function of every true believer.

*After the incarnate Word, **Jesus Christ** leaves earth to return to His Father’s house, what remains behind are the “**Sent Ones**”*

a *body of sanctified Christians*
who now have become the **bearers of His message.**

That Gospel, which was **His message**, *becomes* **our message.**

And *as we bear witness of that message,*
as that Word is preached,
people **believe and come to faith in Christ.**

When Christ walked the earth, He was the **bearer of the Gospel**,
but after He left,

***God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message
preached to save those who believe.***

Down through the centuries *millions upon millions* of people
would **hear that message** and be awakened
to faith *through “their word.”*

Faith springs from hearing, *because*
the **outward preaching of men** is the *instrument*
by which God **draws us to faith.**

Of course **God is the Author of faith**,
but Paul does refer to men,
like *himself* and *Apollos* as
the ministers by whom we believe (1 Cor 3:5.)

In verse 20, in Jesus’ mind’s eye are **all true believers**
throughout the centuries of the church.

He doesn’t pray that they **would be saved**,
but rather He prays for them
as if they **had all been already saved** at that moment
As if they are and **already formed body.**

Just as the “*these*” refers **definitively to the eleven**
the “*those*” refers to a **definitive group**,
which is called the *ecclesia* – the *called out ones* –
the elect – the church.

The request is that *this group may be one*,

We've already seen this request which He already prayed in
verse 11 of the apostles ...

Jhn 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.

The request in verse 21 is the same, but now for the church *at large*:

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.

This is **similarly repeated** in verse 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.

Three times -- **important**.

*The fact that in this last hours it would **so consume His thoughts** means this **unity** is a *matter* that is **very close to Christ's heart**. We therefore, should be **very concerned** to **really know** what it is that **Jesus prays for**, when **He prays for us to be one**.*

Part of the **ruin of the human race** is, that,
having been alienated from God,
it is also **broken** and **scattered** among itself.

God judged His people by **scattering them** ...
disunity is a **mark of the condemnation** of God.

God's desire for His people to be ONE
is expressed by the prophet Jeremiah
even as a **one of the chief motivators**
of His giving the New Covenant:

Jer 32:38-40

And they shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for the good of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.

The **restoration of unity** in the New Covenant
is **manifested** in the church –
being comprised of Jew and Gentile,
where *the dividing wall is removed and
the two are made one new man.*

Paul declares the beauty of the church
is to **consist** in *believers being joined together in one spirit*
and says that apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors,
were given, that they might *edify the body of Christ,*
till it came to **the unity of faith** (Ephesians 4)

When Christ speaks about **unity**,
it is important for us to realize
how the **world is scattered**, when separated from Him

Unity is God's will – it pleases God!

Psa 133:1

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Paul exhorts the Corinthian church in 1 Cor 1:10-11

... by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Rom 15:5 ...

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus;

In Philp 2, Paul's joy is made complete by the Philippian church

... being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

These *passages* celebrate unity!

Unity is God's desire ... it is a matter very close to **God's heart**.

Unity among His people is one of the **greatest displays of His glory on earth**.

He repeats this twice in vss. 21 and 23 ...
that the **unity** for which He prays
would bear testimony to the world

Jesus taught the *very same thing* earlier that evening in John 13:35

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

| This is **no secondary matter** in God's eyes.

Now, *admittedly* this passage of John 17 is grossly misunderstood, misused and abused in the **modern church**.

There is no question that the church has **accelerated** in its **move away** from **doctrine** and has focused the pulpit message on *everything* but the **objective truth of Scripture**.

*And how can Christ's church become of the **same mind**,
unless there **truth** is clearly divided in the form of doctrine?*

*But today's preachers have become comedians, storytellers,
therapists, and showmen,
rather than **powerful envoys of divine truth**. . . .*

JC Ryle warned that if you dare to say of **one doctrine** that '*it is true*'
and of **another** '*it is false*', you can expect to be called
narrow-minded and uncharitable.

And as Paul Crouch from TBN demonstrates this:

*"I'm tired of Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites blocking God's
bridges when the harvest is perishing out there and God's
calling the body to come together. Let Him sort out all this
doctrinal doo-doo, I don't care about it!"*

This is the **false understanding** of **unity** that *consumes*
so much of the *visible church*.

Jesus prayed:

*"**Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth... For their
sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be
sanctified in truth. I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but
for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they
may all be one"** (John 17:17-21).*

The **unity** for which Jesus prays is *preceded by* and *grows out of*
sanctification in the truth.

*Fellowship that ignores or glosses over the **crucial doctrines** of the faith
is **not Christian unity**; it is **ungodly compromise**.*

You see, *if you read this chapter as a whole* . . .
and not **dissect out a single verse** and a proof text for **ecumenism**,
it will become **quite clear** what Jesus prays for.

There are people who hear Jesus' desire that **His people be one** and, strive for **unity** *disregarding doctrine* and *disregarding iniquity*.

But *to the contrary* Scripture says ... Titus 3 – *if there's a heretic – admonish him twice, then **put him out** –*

he **forfeits a right** to **unity** in *Christ's body*.

If there is a *brother or sister in iniquity* ...
go through process (Matt 18)
and if they **do not repent**, you *put them out*.

2 Thess 3:6 commands that you

*withdraw yourselves from every brother that lives an unruly life, and **not after the tradition** which he received of us.*

We are to **withdraw** and **separate** from *heresy* and *iniquity* –

In fact we **must separate** from those who *place themselves outside the **boundary** in which we can be **unified***.

If someone establishes a church with **no doctrinal standards** and they want to *make up the rules as they go along*, it is our **obligation** to **separate from them**.

*In this prayer, our Lord takes care first define **who it is** that *He prays for* – that the **Christian** is **utterly different, separated from** and an **enemy** *of the world*.*

Christians are those who have been **sanctified by the Father** *through **the Word of God***.

*Unquestionably, John 17 is among the **most abused passages** of our time – people *misuse* verse 21 to **suggest** that we need to **unify** *beyond* the border of truth.*

In His *High-priestly prayer*, Jesus is **not wishing** that *we are all buddy buddy – singing the same song – swaying back and forth*

Jesus is **not** hoping against hope for some kind of **external getting along** of the church ...
He is **not** praying for an **ecumenical movement**
that *agrees to disagree*
on matters of **the faith** –
the faith once delivered unto the saints.

No! This is an effectual prayer!

This prayer is a prayer *in the will of God!*

Since Christ has the mind of God, this **prayer of Jesus**
is an *effectual* prayer; He prays *only that which the Father wills.*

The answer to this prayer does not lie in question, but is
ACCOMPLISHED!

The ***oneness*** He prays for has to do with the **very life of God** –
a ***oneness*** that *somehow approximates*
the **essential unity** *between the Father and the Son.*

This is **not a prayer** for His people to get along on the surface,
but one of **how we are made one**, internally –
sharing the **common life of God** *in the souls of men.*

It is for something **supernatural** – *not natural* - that He prays.

This is **very clear** and repeated in vss. 21 and 23 ...

Both vss. 21 and 23 have a **similar structure**,
are *asking for the same thing*,
but a different aspect of that ***unity*** is described.

In vs. 21 we see four aspects of this unity:

The request is ***that they all may be one; as ...***

- 1) thou, Father, art in me, and***
- 2) I in thee,***
- 3) that they also may be one in us:***
- 4) that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.***

In vs. 23 the four parts are:

- 1) *I in them, and*
- 2) *thou in me, that*
- 3) *they may be made perfect in one; and*
- 4) *that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

Jesus words clearly guard AGAINST any kind of mere outward unity ...

Jesus prays that the oneness of His church be *AS* ...
that is - it should resemble ...

The unity that exists *between the Father and the Son*.

Not that the church can ever be one in essence,
as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are,

but that as *Christians* are to be of one mind, effort and purpose
and *in that way* we **resemble the unity of the Trinity**.

In verse 21, Jesus is *not only saying* that the unity
of the Father and Son should be a MODEL for *Christian unity*,
but is the FOUNDATION of it.

thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,
THAT they also may be one in us

This is a prayer is for all those
who were *given to Him*,
who are *sanctified in truth*,
who are *sent into the world*,
who *possess the same eternal life*,

It is a prayer for these chosen ones

to **become partakers of the divine nature** ...
to be *indwelled* with the very presence of God.

verse 23:

***I in them, and thou in me,**
THAT they may be made perfect in one;*

You see how the **unity** for which Christ prays
is **not one** that is attained by human efforts of
getting together beyond doctrinal barriers.

*In fact it has **NOTHING** to do with that at all!*

The **unity** of the Spirit is *already here* –
its not *something* you have to **drum up**,
but *something* you have to **preserve** – to **hold on to** ...
which is done by *pursuing peace one with another.*

But it is not a **unity** that has no regard for truth – but **built upon truth**.

It is not a **unity** without regard to sin, but one **built around holiness**

It is a **unity** of a **common understanding of Scripture**.

It is *incomprehensible* that people can quote these verses in John 17
on **unity** and *forget or ignore* that which is **repeated three times** –
as we are (v. 11),
as Thou Father art in me (v. 21),
even as we are one (v. 22).

Clearly this is no *organizational, fleshly or mechanical unity*,

but one that is **internal**, based upon the *work of God*
causing us to **be in Christ**, by the *living Word of God*.

It is a **union** to which *members are brought together*
as they are **separated from** and **hated by the world**;

a **union** whose members are **set apart unto God**
in the truth of His word.

This is the ONLY unity that the New Testament addresses,
and should be the ONLY unity that we should **endeavor to keep**.

As 1 Cor 6:17 says: **He that is joined to the Lord is One Spirit.**

The world needs to see the **manifestation** of this *true unity*.

I could go on about what unity is NOT,
but *our text* does not dwell on the **negatives**
but on the **desire** of Christ that we be **truly unified**.

So rather than *preach to the choir*, about **false unity**,

I want to take the majority of my time on what unity is ...
on how **God has already answered Jesus' prayer**
that *His church be one*.

The **key** to understanding *true unity* is understanding
what Jesus prays in verse 21 and 23 ...

In what way are the Father and the Son One?
They are *one in essence*. They share the **same life**.
They **share** a *common eternity*.

Jesus is not saying,
"I hope that they'll get along as well as we get along."

He is saying,
*"I want those who belong to me to share the same eternity
that we share,"*

and that prayer is answered every time a person is saved,
because when you are saved,
you literally **share** a **common eternal life**.

You are **born again** to a **new life**.
"Old things are passed away; all things have become new."

That **new life** is **characterized** by the **divine presence**
dwelling in you.

So, *you as a believer* have **dwelling in you**
the **life of God** *in your soul*.

You are not going to GET eternal life when you die--
you *HAVE* it **right now**.

In fact, **salvation** is a **bigger transformation than death**.
At *death* you just **lose the flesh**;
at *salvation*, your **inside** is **totally transformed**—

you now have the **life of God in you**.

So, Jesus is praying,

*"Father, what I want is that the Church would possess the **very life**
that we possess,"*

and **God answered that prayer** – by saving men ...
God **answered that prayer** *in the cross!*

Every time *someone* **puts his trust** and **faith** *in Jesus Christ*
he receives that **same eternal life**.

You see, that's the only way to interpret the **unity**
for which Jesus says, because He says -

*"**That they may be one as You and I, Father are one.**"*

It's **not** that *they are one because they get along so well*;
it's that *they are one because*

they share the **same essential life**, and He is saying,

"I want my people to share that same essential life."

That is one of the **marvelous wonders of salvation**.

That now, *as a Christian*,

it isn't that I have just taken on a new religion;

it isn't that I've got a *new belief system*—

it is that I have a new life!

You're *born again*, and now **the life of God dwells within you**.

You are a *temple of the Holy Spirit* who **lives in you**

and you are a *possessor of the eternal life*--the **life of God**,"

borne out in so many different places in the Epistles –

The secret to true unity is what is called *indwelling* or union with Christ.

As Christians, the eternal God takes up residence in our lives –
we become **one with Him**.

He that is joined to the Lord is One Spirit. 1 Cor 6:17

Gal 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Every believer is in **union with Christ**, and since we all share
His common life, we share that life with each other

1 Cor 12:11-14

*But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, **SO ALSO IS CHRIST**. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.*

So also is Christ.

The name of **Christ** is used here in place of the Church,
Paul wants to **emphasize** the similarity.
so he calls the Church - Christ;

Christ confers upon us this honor —
that *he is willing* to be **esteemed** and **recognized**,
not *in himself only*, but also in his members.

So, as *Christ and the Father are one*,
so *we are one* with him.
Hence it is, that **His name is applied to us**.

Christ is the **bridegroom**, we're the bride.
We **bear His name** – *just as the bride takes her groom's name*.

We are His bride – in Eph 5 it speaks of Christ as the husband
who nourishes and cherishes us –
we are *therefore bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh* –
corporately the **members of His body**.

I am showing you the *indicatives of unity* ...
those Scriptures which **indicate to us what we are as a body** ...
on the basis of our **union with Christ**.

1 Cor 10:16-17

*Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the
blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in
the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many
are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*

It was the *apparent custom* of the early church to **break one loaf**,
and **from that one loaf** to *distribute* to all
this was done to present more clearly
that all believers are in *union* to the **one body of Christ**.

Because we are **one with Christ** we are **one with each other**.
When we come into fellowship with Christ
as we *partake in Communion*,
we **come into fellowship** with each other in a **unique and deep** way.

That's why **unbelievers** cannot partake of the **Lord's supper!**

Because at the Lord's Table,
All believers stand on the **same ground** at the foot of the cross,

as forgiven sinners who possess the SAME eternal life.

Another analogy of the oneness of His body

was given by Jesus earlier that evening, He said:

He is vine, we are the branches within the one vine – that is Christ.

We are all one plant – the *vine* is the whole thing –
the *branches of the vine* is that which is visibly manifest and displays
the fruit.

Apart from the vine, we are *withered and lifeless* –
unidentifiable as *branches* –

but *in the vine*, we are defined as the *vine*.

People look at *the church* – the *branches* and say – that is the vine.

So the *fellowship of the church* is to be **Christ on earth!**

1 Jo 1:1-4

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life — and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us — what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

*As the **Father dwells in the Son**, and
the **Son** (through the Spirit) **dwells in the Christian**,
then naturally, we become partakers
of all of the riches that are **in Christ** –
(pardon, righteousness, joy, love, peace)*

And since all member of the church universal are **all** likewise
partakers in Christ,
then the church will be one,
AS the Father and Son are one.

So the prayer of Jesus is answered *in that we are all one*,
in our like, precious faith,
which binds us together in a spiritually organic union,
which then becomes the basis of our practical common fellowship.

Eph 4:1-7

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love,

vs. 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

vs. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

vs. 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

vs. 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

vs. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

The **command** is that we *bear with one another*
in order that we be **DILIGENT** to preserve the unity of the Spirit ...
that is the **command** to the church in verses 1-3 ...

But then it goes on to explain the **basis** of that **unity** ...

*First and foremost it celebrates the **unity** of the God-head.*

vs. 4 is the Spirit's verse – it is He who *calls us* and *places us in the body*,
comes to dwell in us, as the *guarantee of our inheritance*

vs. 5 is **the Lord's** verse – *one Christ, one redeemer, one faith* –
that is one set of objective facts about Him and His saving work
that are *saving truths* when applied to the heart.

There is *one baptism* –
the **public expression** of faith *associated with salvation*.

vs. 6 is **God the Father's** verse –

*one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and
in all.*

*The implication is ... if there is one Spirit, one Lord, one Father ...
then if there is anything that can be said of the church,
it is that we are to be unified.*

Not at the expense of truth and **not** at the expense of iniquity.

But we unite around the truth – a unity built upon truth –
Unity of THE faith; Unity of THE Spirit.

It is *THAT unity* which belongs to us *because* we all possess
the **SAME faith** and **SAME life of God**,
the **SAME living Christ** and the **SAME Spirit of Christ**.

You can see how these verses have **NOTHING** to do
with a *mere coalition of organizations of churches coming together*

that has **nothing** *whatsoever* to do with unity –
in fact it is a **detriment** to **true unity** which requires truth.

Unity, though *invisible* is *obviously something* that is **manifested**
to the world.

Twice we see repeated the words,
that the world may know,
that the world may believe ...

Unity is a work of God's Holy Spirit that is supposed to be manifested by the church in works of compassion and love one for another.

Jesus said that it is *by our love one for another that the world will know that we are His*.

He also said that our *good works* are to be *seen by the world*, so that they might *glorify God*.

Unity in action *glorifies Christ*,
and it is for this reason that I want to spend the entire time next week talking about the New Testament imperatives concerning unity.
Because as we obey the NT commands to *love, serve, pray for, encourage, exhort, ... one another ...*
we are a display of the *glory* which Christ has given us.

John 17:22

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

Christ gave to the church, *glory* ...

What does that mean?

Christ laid aside his *eternal glory* when He took on flesh, but *nevertheless*, the Father gave to Christ *a glory* in his *earthly life* –

and it is *this glory*
that He now prays to be imparted to His followers.

There is a link between our true *unity* and the *glory* given us.

In fact verse 22 says that Christ left us this *glory*
in order that we might be one.

What is the *glory* that He has given the church?

Realize that **Christ** is *not only* the **image of God**,
in so far as he is the *eternal Word of God*,
but *even in his human nature*,
the **likeness** of the *glory* of the Father **has been engraved.**

In His **humanity**, Christ shares *something in common*
with both **man** and **God**.

And as such, the *glory of the Father*, given to Him
is given
so as to **change his members**
to the **resemblance** of that *glory*.

Humanity is **defaced** by sin, and as a result are *sinful and miserable ...*

Our **happiness** lies in having the **image of God**
restored and **formed anew** in us ...

which can only happen because

Christ – *the God-man* –
who has all things in common with us,

*Also gives us a **glory** which is to be in **His likeness**.*

Paul teaches us this:

***we all, with unveiled face, by beholding THE GLORY OF
GOD, are changed into the same image, (2 Cor 3:18.)***

So *all who are disciples of Christ*, have the ***glory of God***
impressed on them,
we are sealed by the **likeness of Christ**.

It is *as we become like Him* –
that is as we are **sanctified together** as a body,
that we express that *glory*.

I want to leave you with a challenge

Consider, for whom **does Christ pray?**

We know *all believers* ...

but *how* is the **answer** to this prayer **expressed?**

You say, *The church of course.*

But what do you mean by *the church?*

Is the display of the answer of this prayer

in the *universal invisible church?*

If so, then how is this answered?

We know it is not is *some ecumenical movement* ...

And you do get a sense of that *eternal glory*

when you meet a *like-minded Christian* from **another land** –
or another church,

there's *something* that causes your heart to leap

as they **speak** the same *spiritual language* ...

you KNOW that are *co-citizens with them*,

though you *don't even know them* ...

and this does **confound the world**,

as it is always seeking to

separate from people different from themselves.

There is a **glory** in the **bringing together** of people in **the faith**

from all *tribes, tongues* and *nations* ...

as it is a reflection on earth of **what it will be like in heaven.**

But is this all?

Is this the only manner that we see the answer to this prayer?

*How is this **unity**, that we know exists invisibly among the elect going to be **manifest to the world**?*

*How and where is this **glory** specifically **displayed**?*

I ask this because it is **most widely presumed** that in John 17, the **goal** of Jesus request is that *all kinds of Christians from all kinds of churches should be unified* –

that He **prays** for the **unity** of the *universal church*.

And again, I do not deny that there is an element of this ...

but in light of all of the **commands** in the New Testament that can only be fulfilled at the level of the **local church** –

I believe that the answer to this prayer for **unity**
is **PRIMARILY expressed**,
not in *the church all over the world*,
but rather **right here** in your local assembly.

What is the Church?

The word “**church**” in Greek is “*ekklessia*”
which means “*an assembly*.”

It is from the Greek word “*eklektos*” translates to “*the called out ones*”
or “*elect*”

These two terms together gives a definition of “church.”

Church: *An assembly of called out ones.*

The church then is a **local gathering of Christians** –
who are *part of a universal group* –
but **the local church** is the *manner* in which that *universal group*
is **understood** and **displayed**.

While there references to a “corporate” definition of church
in the New Testament,
for example this “*corporate church*” or *body*

is the one in which “*Christ...gave Himself up for her*” (Eph 5);
Jesus is also the “*head of the body, the church*” (Col 1:18);
the church is a “*bride adorned for her husband*” (Rev 21:2);

But when the New Testament refers to the church, far more frequently,
it does so with a **local understanding**.

The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith defines the *universal church*
(from chapter 26).

The universal church, which (with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

While *the elect currently alive* are **members** of the *universal church*
can we say, that a *universal church exists today*.

That is ... is there a *universal assembly* of these *called out ones*?

Where does the “*universal church*” gather?

Where does it express its *love* for *one another*?

Only in heaven will the **full number** of *the elect* be **assembled**
before the Lamb ... where ...

... a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9-10)

And yes, this *will be* the **final consummation**
and **final answer** to this prayer of Jesus!

But what about now?

Is the church only “*invisible?*”
And if so, how then is a **display of glory**
so that *the world might see it?*

I believe that while the *universal church* is *invisible*, that it is the
local church that is a *Type of* and *Representation of*
of the universal Church

When we go to *church*, as we **participate** in our *local assembly* ...
we should be getting a taste
of what the *universal assembly* of believers **will look like**.

In light of this

I'd ask you to **pray for two things this week** ...
as you *review the verses* and *cross-references* in this week's notes ...
to **prayerfully consider**:

1) where your **focus** and **energy** in the **display of unity**
should be.

I know we all have friends outside of this church ...
but my challenge to you as you read the verses this week
is that you **seek how you might apply them** to *this local assembly*.

Are you gifts being used here?
If not, why not?

Have you **made yourself available** to truly be an **active member here?**

*Some of you are more consistent in your fellowship with other assemblies
than you are with your own.*

If the **display** of the **glory** He has given us
is to be **exhibited** in *the love we have one for another here*
within the church ...

my challenge to you is **how** *is that being fulfilled in YOU?*

2) that you pray that you would truly understand how the **local church** that IS a *Type of* and *Representation of* of the **universal Church**

So that as we do gather as a *church*,
that we do so realizing that this is a taste
of what the *universal assembly* of believers **will be like**.

May such an understanding enhance our worship of Christ
in the *visible church* **today**.

Col 3:12-14

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.