

UNITY IN THE CHURCH – Part 1

John Hannah

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Key Verse: Acts 4:32

INTRODUCTION

As the Lord comes to the last few hours of his life, John 14 - 17 records in detail his final words of encouragement and teaching to his disciples – words that are spoken after Judas has departed on his mission of betrayal, but before Jesus and the disciples leave for the Mount of Olives. In these last few moments, Jesus seeks to prepare his disciples not only for the events that are about to unfold but also for his departure. In Ch.16, we see the Father's Provision for their Future (the coming of the comforter, the Holy Spirit) and in Ch.17, we read of Jesus' Prayer for their Future.

This is a time for a final few vital words. In his prayer in Ch. 17 Jesus:

Prays for his disciples (v.6-19) – a prayer for personal protection.

Prays for all believers (v.20-26) – a prayer for corporate protection – it is prayer for unity.

"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. ----. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (v.20 - 23).

In v.20 – 26, we observe two things:

The nature of the unity that is to exist between believers: Heb. 1:3 tells us that Jesus was "*the exact representation*" of his Father's being and Col. 1 that, "*He is the image of the invisible god*". In the gospel of John Jesus says, "*to know me is to know the Father*", "*to honour me is to honour that Father*" and, "*I always do what pleases him*". The picture of the unity between Father and son is of **oneness in thought and person**.

The importance of unity between believers. This unity is to be an unambiguous display to the world, not only that Jesus is the Messiah, but also that God loves those who believe. Unity amongst believers, then, not only proclaims the deity of Christ but it proclaims God's love for the believer and the fact that he loves you and I no less than he loved His own Son.

As the church begins to take root in Jerusalem, we find in Acts 4:32 a remarkable statement about God's people, namely, that "*all the believers were one in heart and mind*", not only that, but they shared everything they had. Amongst other things, it is no coincidence that v.33 notes, "*With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.*"

As the New Testament unfolds Paul writes to the believers in Rome with these words:

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom.15:5). Perhaps Paul had in mind the words of Ps. 133.

As we examine the NT, we find that one of the consistent themes is the call for unity and oneness of heart amongst believers. We find it, for example, in Eph. 4:3; Phil. 2:2; Col. 3:14 and also in I Pet.3:8

The unambiguous call of the scriptures is for believers to love each other and to walk together in unity.

WHAT DESTROYS UNITY? (The following is a non-exhaustive list)

If you are new or visiting; a special warm welcome to you. We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

This Morning

Speaker John Hannah

This Evening

- JCF 5.00pm
- Creation Evangelism 7.00pm

Next Sunday

19 July. John Hannah

Thursday Kidz Club

6:30 - 8:00 pm

7 - 12 year olds

Ph: Allan Maguire - 4767197

Prayer Items

Jillian, Japan, asks for prayer for a weekly English class and Bible study which is attended by South Koreans as well as Japanese. Of ten three languages are being used.

Please pray for Summer camp beginning in late July and continuing into August.

Also please pray for a Christian family, in which the father recently went through a long and difficult operation – and now faces months of hospitalisation. Pray for the family as they adjust to the changes.

Shane and Rene, Philippines, arrive back in New Zealand on Friday, July 10. Please pray for them as they (along with their family) settle back into New Zealand culture, lifestyle and church environment. Pray that they will know God's leading on their lives in future weeks and months.

Small Groups

Tuesday

- Ladies Home Group - see Laura Hannah 473-7954
- Central Home Group - see Steve Clark 479-2070
- Brockville Home Group - see Geoffrey Stewart 476-7888

Thursday

- JCF Home Group - see Gideon Chang 488-2118
- Town Home Group - see Dave Smeaton 453 0569

Friday

- Friday morning Home Group - see Bethney Stewart 476-7888

Prayer Groups

Wednesday

- Men's prayer group meeting at Dan and Steps from 6:30am till around 8am.

Thursday

- All Saints main church building from 5:15pm

Sunday

- All Saints Hall from 9.00am

1. **Pride** "Pride leads to arguments ---", (Prov.13:10). "When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom." (Prov.11:2)
 - "It's got to be done my way."
 - "I want people to notice me."
 - "I've got the corner on scriptural truth – it's either my way or the highway."
 The tendency here is one of majoring on the minors.
 - Unwilling to say, "I'm sorry", irrespective of the rights and wrongs.

Self-Centredness (i.e., me first). My needs are greater than your needs – I insist that my desire take precedence! For example, I insist that my desire for the old hymns of the faith take precedence over your desire for contemporary music. Remember Phil 2:4, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others".

A Complaining Spirit (Phil. 2:14,15). Observe the grumbling of Israel in Exodus 16:3 and 17:2. Note also Numbers 11 and the judgement that followed.

Insensitivity. The scriptures talk about us being, "tender-hearted" toward each other.

Unwilling to Forgive (Eph. 4:32). "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you". Ask only these two questions: "To what extent did Christ forgive me", and, "Am I forgiving others similarly?"

"To forgive is to set a prisoner free but then to discover that the prisoner was me" – source unknown.

The antidote to all of the above is found in Luke 10:27!!!

NOTICES

- Continuing the tradition we are establishing of holding several joint congregations events each year, the All Saints Vestry would like to invite your congregations (Cornerstone & Japanese Fellowship) to join with us on Saturday 18 July, beginning at 7.00pm, in the Front Hall. We invite your congregation to provide a musical item (or two). There would be a supper, and we ask if some members of your congregation could bring along food for the supper. Mark Hughes
- If anyone is interested in forming a group of young men to attend this year's Promise Keepers, please see Alan Knight. There are on the notice board and church table a poster and registration forms. The conference will be in Dunedin 31 July - 1 August. The full cost is \$87.00
- There is a brochure with registration form promoting 'Arise' conference in Wellington 6 - 8 August 2009