

## “Ultimate Unity” (Jn. 17:20-26)

### 1. <sup>1</sup>Unity’s Expansion (20-21)

- a. Inclusion: He prayed for you! Thus expanding the unity of His disciples. The unity of the kingdom transcends that of ethnicity, social status, gender, sport’s teams, or even families.
- b. Incorporation: Jn. 10:16; Gen. 12:3; Col. 3:11. In fact, ours is an eternal family. The unity is seen as that of a marriage, family, vine, temple, and body. Individual parts are necessary yet with their different functions work harmoniously together. And the unity of the Church is the living Body of Christ in this age which will overcome by their testimony in the person and work of Christ Jesus.
- c. Canon: Expansion via unity in His Word. “Their word” = His Word – nothing more and nothing less. Jude 3 “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”<sup>2</sup> Consider more than another dozen verses which convey the fact that they and we are not to veer away from the traditions, commands, teachings, doctrines, etc. which have been passed down from the LORD. See more than two dozen verses regarding such: Ro. 1:16; 15:4; 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:3, 6-7; 4:1, 6, 11, 15-16; 5:21; 6:2-5, 11-14, 20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2:21; Jude 3 (above).
- d. Spiritual: A profound union (21)! “As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us.”
  - i. Nature of this unity is relational and spiritual and yet to be fully realized.
  - ii. The current realization of it (unity) is visible (albeit not tangible) and thus “that the world may believe that You sent Me.” Bruce Milne concisely summed it up: “Just as Jesus disclosed the unseen God to the world by becoming flesh (1:14), so the church will be a visible revelation of the unseen Father and his love. Thus, while the unity Jesus prays for us is not organizationally produced, it is equally not historically invisible. The world needs to see our unity.”<sup>3</sup>
  - iii. Such is not uniformity but a unity of essentials taught and practiced in the Word. Such is why we can enjoy interdenominational conferences, services, Bible studies, accountability groups, etc.
  - iv. It is not liturgies or ecumenical practices which unite us but the core of the traditions, commands, teachings, and doctrines which unite; thus we must have a healthy understanding of correct doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3, 6-7; 4:1). Since some commentaries take the opportunity to list the essentials (with nuanced emphasis), I’ll briefly offer a list:
    1. Scripture’s Authority (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12)
    2. Original Sin (Gen. 3; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Ro. 5:12-21) →
    3. Incarnation (Jn. 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 10:11-18; Phil. 2:1-11) →
    4. Deity of Christ (Jn. 1:1, 14; Heb. 1:2-3ff.; Col. 1:15-16) →
    5. Substitutionary Atonement (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Isa. 53:4-5) →
    6. Resurrection (1 Cor. 15; Mat. 28:11-13; 1 Thess. 4:13-18)
    7. Regeneration/Salvation. The Father’s commission, the Son’s execution, the Spirit’s application.
      - a. Justification – freed from sin’s penalty

<sup>1</sup> Title and headings of “Unity” regard that of Christ’s within the godhead and us.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version* (Jud 3). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> Milne, B. (1993). *The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide* (p. 248). InterVarsity Press.

## “Ultimate Unity” (Jn. 17:20-26)

- b. Sanctification – breaking free from sin’s power
  - c. Glorification – free from sin’s presence
  - 8. Trinity (1 Jn. 5:7-8; Jn. 14-17; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:1; Ps. 139 esp. v. 7)
  - 9. New Creation or “Age to come”
    - a. Is Inaugurated via new birth/life in Christ (1 Cor. 15:20-28; 2 Cor. 5:17; Jn. 17:3 cf. 5:24-25)
    - b. Will be Consummated via new heavens and earth (Ro. 8:18-25; Rev. 21:1-22:5 cf. Isa. 60:11-22; 65: 17-25; 66:22-24).
2. Unity’s Glory (22-23)
- a. God’s Glory. D. A. Carson wrote: The glory the Father gave the Son was the glory of the humility of the incarnation, culminating both in the glorification of the Son at the crucifixion and in the glory of his resurrected and exalted state. Believers have seen something of this glory, except for the glory Christ now enjoys; and that, too, they shall one day see, since Jesus prays to that end (17:24). But the words, “I have given them the glory that you gave me” are ambiguous, and may say more than I have suggested so far. They may indicate not only that Christ has given us his glory in the sense that we can now perceive it, but also that Christ has given us his glory in the sense that we now possess it. If the latter thought is included, the text is telling us that our true glory is the way of the cross. That way is vindicated by the glory of triumph later; but already we have something of Jesus’ glory inasmuch as we, like him, are to endure the enmity of the world and walk as suffering servants. This is our glory, not our shame. W. Barclay comments, “We must never think of our cross as our penalty; we must think of it as our glory.... The harder the task we give a student, or a craftsman, or a surgeon, the more we honour him.... So when it is hard to be a Christian, we must regard it as our glory, as our honour given to us by God.”<sup>4</sup>
  - b. The World’s Glory: We were designed to exercise our attributes, which we share in His likeness, unto His glory. It has been described as our chief end. It is also God’s plan to glorify Himself in His Son and His people. However, we love to attain glory for ourselves, families, and teams. Satan sought glory for himself and was cast down from God’s presence.
  - c. God’s glory and love are not as the world’s, for God’s love is righteous (1 Cor. 13:6) and the world’s is Hedonistic. Foreigner’s song, “I Want to Know What Love is.” Love is righteous, sacrificial, and truthful!
  - d. This glory for which we were designed, however; is a glory that unifies us the church as the Godhead is one. And such is a witness “That the world may know” of Jesus was sent to us and loves us “as You have loved Me.” It is incomprehensible that the Father’s love is unto us as it is unto the Son!
  - e. “That the world may know.” Sue and Sue: One Sue contributes to the church theologically and apologetically among other ways. The other Sue contributes via being engaged socially, representing Christ to particular associations. Each Sue is contributing differently but worshiping corporately. Both Sues are glorifying Christ and enjoying His fellowship though they have different skills, dispositions, situations, etc. And they are enjoying the fellowship of one another!
3. Unity’s End (24)

---

<sup>4</sup> Carson, D. A. (1988). [\*The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus: An Exposition of John 14–17\*](#) (pp. 197–198). Baker Book House.

## “Ultimate Unity” (Jn. 17:20-26)

- a. This unity and love will make us perfect in oneness. Carson: “Like sanctification, this oneness is simultaneously something already achieved and something that needs perfecting. On the one hand believers, if they are true believers, are already one: the triune God has already taken up residence within them, and they live by faith in Jesus Christ. This is common for all of them. There is a common experience of grace, a common object of faith, a common eternal destination, a common regeneracy, a common rejection of the “world,” a common perception of the Lord’s glory. These ties make them one. The things that unite true Christians are so deep and eternal that they transcend the things that divide them. Christians are truly one. On the other hand, Christians need to grow in their unity; for Jesus prays, “May they be brought to complete unity ...” (17:23). The implication is that their unity, while real, is not perfect. Sad to tell, too often Christians do not cherish deeply the things that unite them with other true believers: they cherish instead the divisive things. Even where there is some point of conscience at stake, there is a danger that in defending what we hold to be a point of truth we may endanger the integrity of this witness of loving unity. At the level of praxis, at the level of attitude, at the level of love, at the level of a growing grasp of true doctrine—at all of these levels the Christian church needs to be perfected in unity. For this Jesus himself prays; and one day he will see this prayer answered without qualification. The expanding unity will yet become the perfect unity.”<sup>5</sup>
  - b. “In Christ” is the believer’s present reality (Ro. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Jn. 5:20) and the believer’s future glory (Col. 3:3-4).
  - c. Visio Dei: “that they behold My glory.” Jesus looked ahead and expressed His desire “will” that we may be together with Him where He resides. This is our great hope. To see Him and be with Him forevermore. It is His end game and the current objective is conforming us to His image so that such will be possible. He had already promised this future reality in Jn. 14:3.
  - d. Not unlike sanctification and unity, the glory is both a reality now and later. The glory of the Cross and humility via obedience and faith now and the Visio Dei in the age to come (1 Jn. 3:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 12:10; 2 Pet. 1:4). So too the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ →
4. Unity’s Agencies
- a. Jesus concludes with “O righteous Father! The world has not known You.” Contrary to the righteous One, the world which knows not the joy, assurance, unity, love, righteousness, or glory of Christ is partially the target of such and also a means of our glory (Ro. 8:17-18); not unlike Jesus’ glory was to resist the temptations of such and overcome by faith i.e. obedient humility (Jn. 16:33; Heb. 5:8).
  - b. Our overcoming witness of the revealed name of God (see vv. 6 & 26) testifies that we know Him while continuing to reveal the mystery (Col. 1:24-27). And we know Him because He is in us (26). Therefore, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, is the Agent of our unity (Eph. 4:4-6) and glory (2 Cor. 4:13, 17).
  - c. Such indwelling is both individually and corporately (Eph. 3:14-21).

---

<sup>5</sup> Carson, D. A. (1988). *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus: An Exposition of John 14–17* (p. 199). Baker Book House.