

News & Notes

Sunday, March 7, 2010

Remember in Prayer: Robbie Alberson; Mary Baily; James Brewer; Johnny Carr; Sherri Fewels; Marie Hall; Calprettina Judge; David Judge; Martha Lou Jones; Doretha Judge; Dot Ketchum; John and Deliah Mann; Judy Massey; Amy May; Lowell Poff; Ann Ray; Curtis Ray; Wendy Rickman; Vera Roberson; Willa Shaw; Johnny Weatherly; Joan Wilkerson;

Sympathy is extended the families of Carin Crayton, Jerry Hall, Judy Massey, and Willa Shaw.

Pantry item for the month of March is trash bags.

Be sure and check the **bulletin boards** for additional information.

Ashland Events: Today: Periodic singing at Briarcrest Extended Care at 4:00 PM; March 20: Area-wide gospel singing;

Area Events: March 27: Senior adult rally at the Henderson congregation;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: The Organization of the Church

PM: The Purpose of the Church

For the Record (February 28, 2010):

Attendance: 66 Contribution: \$847.00 Budget: \$1388.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM

Worship 10:30 AM

Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 6:30 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King

Jeff Roberson

Carrol Street

ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

A YEAR OF REMEMBRANCE

"Remind them of these things..." (2Timothy 2:14)

A Plea for Unity

John 17:20-24

Jeremy Northrop

Current western culture stands in a mess of religious division. The latest number of different religious bodies is in the thousands. Even within some of the various religious denominations which exist today there are sects or divisions within the divisions. Unfortunately, the Lord's church is no exception. Liberalism, anti-ism, and extremism have all made their way into the religious world at large and even into the church of Christ. All of this division goes against biblical unity. In John 17:20-23, Jesus prays a prayer for unity. The current religious division is against God.

There are some serious consequences to not adhering to the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17. Calling people to the gospel of Jesus Christ is only increasingly harder when the church does not have unity. Jesus declares the final consequences of not following after God in Matthew 15:13-14: "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

There have been many attempts by many people to have religious unity. Jesus gives the biblical answer for unity in John 17:20-23:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in

You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

The PLEA for Unity (Vs. 20-21a)

One of the greatest comforts in all the scripture is the realization that Christ has prayed for all saints. In verses 1-5 of this chapter, Christ affirms in His prayer He had done for God the things the Father has sent Him to do. Verses 6-19, Jesus begins to pray for the apostles with whom He had been working during His earthly ministry. In verse 20, He begins to pray for all disciples, then and now. He prays for Christians today. Many believe Christ exists (John 8:58) and that He is the Son of God (Matthew 16:13-14, 16), and that God sent His Son into the world (John 3:16). Unity is found in believing, truly believing on Christ.

The world and many in the larger religious world attempt to find unity in ways the Bible does not authorize. The world wants unity above the church. God demands unity through the church. The world wants unity through compromise. God demands unity through allegiance. The world wants unity through pluralism. God demands unity through His Son (John 14:7). The biblical concept of unity can be seen through a simple mathematical equation: If $A=B$ and $A=C$, then $B=C$. The simple idea is that if one man has unity with God and another man has unity with God, then these two men have unity with each other. This is the unity for which Jesus prayed.

The PURPOSE for Unity (Vs. 21)

Specifically, the unity for which Jesus sought is so that Christians today can have unity with the Father and the Son. How do the Father and the Son have unity with each other? They have unity in purpose and plan. This unity is accomplished by the Son submitting to the Father (John 4:34; 6:38, 40; Luke 22:42). Today, God calls Christians to imitate the Son knowing He is a

pattern for their lives (see Philippians 2:5). When Christians follow after Christ, they will have unity with God. Christians submitting to the will of God will provide biblical unity.

Implicitly, the passage teaches some of the other benefits to biblical unity. Biblical unity will provide a level of tolerance. Biblical unity reinforces and encourages belief. Through biblical unity, the world can be reached with the gospel. No one wants to be a part of a group which does not have unity. Thus, it is essential the world see unity in the church today. Otherwise, there will be some who will not seek the salvation found in the church. The world needs salvation. Therefore, the world needs the unified church.

The PROMISE of Unity (Vs. 22-24)

The prayer of Jesus for unity shows also that there are genuine benefits to unity as well. First, the church can have glory. Christ gives the church glory. In fact, the glory is inherited through Christ and the glory He has. Then, the people who are members of the church can have perfection or completeness. Jesus promises this completeness in Matthew 5:48, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." In the prayer of John 17, Jesus promises completeness in one. This again indicates the singular nature of the church and the way to salvation. Eventually, the promise of biblical unity assures each Christian a home in Heaven with God. Unity assures each Christian they will be able to see Christ in all His glory.

Conclusion

Many today are advocating the concept that unity is impossible. They will say that there are always differences of opinion concerning religious matters. From man's perspective, it certainly would be difficult to achieve unity. However, would Jesus have prayed for something which is impossible? Certainly, He would not have done such. The church needs to achieve unity. In fact, the church must achieve unity. This will accomplish the plea of Jesus, fulfill the purpose of unity, and allow Christians to receive the promises which come with biblical unity. The church can achieve unity by adherence to the Word.