

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

BIBLICAL UNITY **“Christ and Unity”**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. This is our last lesson in our series of unity. We began looking in our first lesson at some misconceptions of unity. We realize that unity, as important as it is...truth can never be compromised to have unity. We can never ignore problems to have unity or ignore sin. And it does matter what we are unified on. Many people today are saying it doesn't matter. But it truly does. We must be unified on truth. Our second lesson we talked about if unity is so important, how do you have unity? How do you have true biblical unity? We looked at three keys. The first key was we must have one standard. We saw that that standard is the Word of God. The second key we looked at is we must know what's in the Word of God. What good would it do if we have the Bible, and we agree that it was our standard, but we didn't know anything about it? Then the third one is we must do what the Bible says, no matter what. No matter what anybody taught us before, we must follow what the Bible says. In our last lesson we looked at how important it was that we not fall into false doctrine because that was one of the leading causes of division, is that false teachers were going out and teaching things that were contrary to the Word of God. We saw that we cannot be falling into that category, and that God hates false teaching. God hates it when we teach anything contrary to the Word of God, and we must hate it, too, and firmly oppose false doctrine and false teaching when we see that it's slipping in where we're at. Then we saw that we can have unity. It is possible to have unity based on 1 Corinthians 1:10, and that we must follow that and have true biblical unity.

In this last lesson we're going to be looking at, in lesson number four, this last lesson that we have here, Christ and unity. Christ and unity. If Christ was deity, and He came to Earth and preached on unity, it would be very important to see what He had to say about unity and how He lived His life and what lessons we can take from Christ and apply them to our life so that we can always be pleasing to God in the unity that we have. I want us to first look at the prayer of Christ in regards to unity. The prayer of Christ. In John 17 beginning in verse 20 Jesus says,

“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.”

Notice that. Jesus is praying that we be unified just as Christ is in God the Father and the Father in God the Son, Christ, and “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.” So Christ prayed for unity. In John 17 He began by praying for Himself, and then He begins praying for His disciples or what would become the apostles. And then what we just read is He was praying for all of those who followed Him, that they all be united, that they all be as one. This is not a “You do your thing, I'll do mine” mentality. Jesus Christ wants us

to be unified. He prayed for unity. When we pray, that's something that is a very serious thing. We may go to church and listen to prayers and hear prayers being said. That's a very serious time. But can you imagine the importance that we need to be placing on the prayer of Jesus Christ, the prayer that He prayed?

Now again, I want to emphasize the way that we are to be unified. We are to be unified as Christ is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. So for a minute I want us to talk about what that means. I want us to deal with the unity of the Godhead. We have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When I speak of the Godhead, that's what I mean—the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. And they all share one divine nature. There is one God, and three persons within that one God. We read of this in Matthew 28:19-20 and 1 Corinthians 12:4,6, 1 Peter 1:1-2, and many other verses speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all being one, all being together. Each person in the Godhead is called God. We have God the Father in 1 Corinthians 15:24. It says, "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father." So we have God the Father. But we also have God the Son, which is Christ. In Hebrews 1:8 God the Father speaks to God the Son and says, "But to the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.'" So God the Son is called Jehovah. There are people who want to deny the deity of Jesus Christ. But He is called Jehovah. Then we last look at God the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5:3-4 we read that Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit, but then it turns around and calls the Holy Spirit "God" in verse 4. So the reason I wanted us to look at that is the importance of how unified we are to be. You cannot get any more unified than the Godhead. There is one God in three persons. A good illustration I heard one time is it's like ice, water, and vapor. They're all the same thing, but they have different functions. They're three persons. There are different functions, just as the Godhead is. God the Father. God the Son. God the Holy Spirit. That's the unity that Jesus Christ was praying for us to have. I've heard people take this chapter in John 17 and take it out of context and say, "Well, He's just praying that we all have love for one another." Well, we must have love one for another—a true biblical love. But it goes much more deeper than that. We are to be unified as they are unified. Titus 2:13 says, "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." So again, the emphasis there, put on Jesus Christ the Son and God the Father, the oneness that they have is the oneness that Jesus Christ prayed for. This is the unity that Jesus wants us to have. In John 14:9 it says, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" He's saying, "You know, you should be able to know the Father because you've known me. You've seen Me." Again, the unity that is placed within that. That is the prayer of Christ.

Well, now I want us to notice the death of Christ, and the importance that the death of Christ places on unity, and what it did so that we could be unified. Jesus had to come to Earth and die so He could shed His blood. That's the reason that Jesus Christ died, so that His blood could be shed. In John 3:16, a verse that a lot of people know, it says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." This is a verse that a lot of people quote, a lot of people know, a lot of people say, "This is my favorite verse." They may not know much more about the Bible, but they know of this verse. Yet do we really understand its importance? Jesus Christ had to come to Earth. He had to die so that our sins could be taken away, so that His blood could be shed. Revelation 1:5 emphasizes the blood. It says, "And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

When do we have our sins washed away? When we come in contact with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 10 beginning in verse 1, it says,

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

You see, under the Old Law it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins of themselves. The blood of Jesus Christ had to be shed. Without the blood we could never be one in the sight of Christ. Ephesians 2, beginning in verse 14. Paul is writing to the Ephesians, and he is dealing with this same subject. It says,

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one [which is in reference to Jew and Gentile; in other words, everyone can now be one], and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

What is Paul talking about? Well, he's talking about the death of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ had not come to this Earth, lived a perfect life, and had died, we could not be one in the sight of Christ. We could not be unified. But because He broke down that wall of separation, that Old Law, through His death, everyone can have access to God now through the Word of God. When we go to the New Testament, we can learn what we must do to be saved. And everyone—Jew, Gentile, poor, rich—anybody, any color, any nationality can be a faithful Christian if we do what the Bible says. In Ephesians 2 beginning in verse 17 it says, “And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” So we must go through Christ, as John 14:6 says. There is no other way but...

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. [This verse 21 is very important.] For He made Him who knew no sin [which is talking about Jesus; in other words, He was our ultimate sacrifice; why?] to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

The importance that is placed on the death of Christ, of His blood being shed, that we now can be reconciled, that we can be redeemed and bought back by the blood of Jesus Christ through the death because of His death, because of that shedding of blood. In reference to the Gentiles, after Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, in Acts 11:18 it says, “When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’” Now the Gentiles, which would be everyone, everyone can now have an opportunity, not for the Jews only. In fact, Jesus Christ even made this prophecy in the Book of John, John 10 beginning in verse 14. He says,

“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold [At this point in time, that's what Jesus is talking about]; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me [Why?], because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

You see, Jesus is talking about not only are the Jews at that point, not only could they be saved, but there's going to be a time when those who are not of the fold at this point. So when Jesus died, He broke down that wall, as we read in Ephesians chapter 2. Why? Because of Jesus Christ's death we can all now be on inside of Him.

So we looked at the prayer of Christ, and how we are to be unified and what type of unity we are to have by the prayer of Christ. And now we've looked at, we've gone and studied and understood that the death of Christ, what great importance that it places on unity, and without it we cannot have unity. And let me emphasize this point. If Jesus Christ died to have unity, when we refuse to have unity with one another when it comes to truth.... Now again, there's going to be times when we have to stand for the truth, and there's going to be division and it's going to be because they're not following the Bible. But when those of the world say, "You know what? I'm going to do my thing and you do your thing. It doesn't matter," can you imagine the mockery that's going to God because of that? Because He loved us enough to die for us that we could be one, and we are refusing not to be one because of our own opinions and what we want to believe.

But now I want us to look at the body of Christ. The body of Christ. Ephesians 4:1 says, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called." I just want to make mention. This calling is not a miraculous calling as many people say today. In 2 Thessalonians 2:14 this is simply a call by the Gospel, that we are called through the Word of God. Romans 10:17 says that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So that's who he's talking about—those who have obeyed the Bible. He beseeches us to walk worthy of our calling. Then he goes on to say,

"...with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace [doing everything that we can to have unity]. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

So there is one body. That's what I want to emphasize—the body of Christ. There is only one body. Ephesians 4:4, what we just read, there is only one body. Romans 12 beginning in verses 4 and 5 says that there is only one body. First Corinthians 12:20 says that there is one body. Colossians says that there is one body. And this is just a few of the verses. There are many verses that talk about how there is only one body. There's not many bodies; there's only one body. First Corinthians 12:12 speaks more about what this body is and what it's made up. Beginning in verse 12 it says, "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." There again we see the emphasis. There are many members. All of the faithful Christians make up the body of Christ. There is only one body, but there's many faithful Christians within that body that make it up. "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." And that one Spirit there is talking in symbolic language. John 6:63 speaks of that. It's just the Word of God, taking the Word of God. "For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body?" In other words, he's saying that, look at the human body. And there's one body. Everybody has one body. Within that one body there's different members. What if all of a sudden the ear talked to the eye, or the hand talked to the ear, and said, "Well, you're not the eye. You know, you're not the foot. You're not the hand. Therefore you're really not of the body." He goes on to say,

"And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each

one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. "

Have you ever stubbed your pinky toe? Something that seems so small on the body, yet it makes your whole body hurt, doesn't it? Your hand doesn't say, "Well, that's the pinky toe, and it doesn't hurt." Your whole body hurts, even when you stub the smallest of your members. Well, in the body of Christ there are those who maybe cannot do as much because of physical conditions or whatever it may be. But they still play a part in the body of Christ, and we must have them all so that we can work properly, just like the Lord's church. He goes on to say,

"And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body."

There we have again. There shouldn't be any schism in the body of Christ. There should be no division in the body of Christ.

"...but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

It's interesting to note that sometimes maybe there's a brother or sister in Christ who has received a great reward, maybe in the secular world. They've really done great. They've been able to be honored some way or just things are really going good for them. Do we rejoice with that person? Or do we say, "Well, I know. He probably cheated his way to do that." Out of jealousy, do we make remarks like that? We shouldn't. We should have the same care for another and rejoice. When one is doing something good, we need to rejoice with it. When one is suffering, we don't need to say, "Well, that's their problem. They need to deal with that." We need to help that person out. We need to be unified in the body of Christ. So again, it says, "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually."

Now I want us to go a little deeper with this. It says that there is one body. There's nobody who would deny that. But there are many people out there who deny the idea of the one church, of there only being one church, of there only being one church. But what does the Bible have to say about this? In Ephesians 1 beginning in verse 22 Paul says, "And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Isn't that interesting? We understand that there is one body. That body is made up of all faithful Christians. And at the same time that body is the church. Now if there is one body, and it's the same thing as the church, what's our conclusion on how many churches there are? There's only one church. Jesus Christ only built one church. Jesus Christ only established one church. There must be unity in that body, which is the church. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus didn't say He was going to build His **churches** (plural). He said He was going to build His **church** (singular). One church, which is the body, which is the church. There's only one. There's not many. We cannot be unified unless we are first even in the body of Christ. If we are not in the body of Christ, then you are already separating yourselves. You're already causing division because you're not even first in the body of Christ. And we cannot be in the body unless we are in His church. So unless we are in the Lord's church, unless we are in the church of Christ, as Romans 16:16 says, we're not saved. We are not in the body. Now people come to Romans 16:16 and say, "Well, it says 'churches of Christ.'" But in Matthew 16:18 Jesus

said He's only going to build one church. So how do you put that together? Well, it's very easy. There's many congregations of the Lord's people. "Church" just means "called out." There's only one group that's called out, but there are some faithful Christians living here, there are some living there. We can't all come together because of distance. Therefore all the faithful Christians together come together and make up that one body. And as a whole, we are the one body. But we need to understand that there is only one church, and there's many congregations of the church of Christ. You may go to one place and see the Lord's church, the church of Christ. You go to another. But there is only one. Think about your favorite restaurant. Maybe a favorite fast food. There's only one of those, but they are in many different locations when you travel. You will see those different places. And they all serve the same thing. They all have the same menu. They are all unified on what they do. So is the church.

So how does one get into the body? How does one get into the Lord's church? Well, 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." Ephesians 4:5 says there is only one baptism. And we must be baptized with that. Galatians 3:27 says that we are baptized into Christ. Romans 6:3 talks about how we are baptized into Christ again. So we are baptized into Christ, thus having our sins washed away. In Acts 2:47 the Lord adds those who are saved to the church. You don't join a church. The Lord adds you to His church, the one church, the church of Christ. First Peter 3:21 says that baptism saves us. We need to understand that we are following the Word of God, and that if we are not in the one church, the Lord's church, the church of Christ, the one body of Christ, we are lost. We are not saved. We must be in the body to be saved.

The last point I want us to look at is the division of Christ. The division of Christ. Now why it was so important to have unity, Christ understood that there would be times when we do stand up for the truth, there would be division caused. John 7:40 says, "Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, 'Truly this is the Prophet.' Others said, 'This is the Christ.' But some said, 'Will the Christ come out of Galilee?'" Then he goes on to say that there was a division because of Christ. There was a division because of Him. Now is Christ wrong for causing a division? Of course not. Why? Because it was a division based on truth. Sometimes today when we stand for the truth, there will be division. But it's a godly division, one that is authorized, not a division caused by worldly things or false doctrine, but a division caused by truth. In John 9:16 we read that, again, Christ caused a division over a miracle He did. In John 10:19 again we see that Christ causes a division. These are just a few of the verses. If you would read through the whole Gospels you will see that Jesus caused many divisions. In Matthew 10:34 Jesus says, "

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

So we need to understand that truth will divide. But it is a division that needs to happen. Second Corinthians 6:14 says, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" So we need to always preach the truth. We need to live by the truth. And sometimes truth will divide. We need to understand that. Many times today when we are maybe preaching the truth and living a godly life, and there is division, people say, "Well, you're the one dividing. You're the one the Bible condemns." Well of course we're not. If we're

doing what the Bible says, we're following right in line with Jesus Christ. There's going to be times that there will be division—a division that is commanded, we need to have if we are standing for the truth. First John 1:5 says,

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

As faithful Christians we can only have fellowship with other faithful Christians. Those who are not in the Lord's church, the church of Christ, are not living a faithful Christian life. They are lost. They have no hope yet because they are not in the body. We can only have fellowship with those who have fellowship with God. And the only way we know that is if they are walking in the light. Have they heard the Word? Have they believed what the Bible has to say? And have they repented of their sins? Have they confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? And have they been baptized for the forgiveness of their sins? If one is not in the Lord's church, the body of Christ, the church of Christ, they are not saved. That's what the Bible has to say. That's not my opinion or anybody else's opinion. That's what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 in reference to His body. We hope that this lesson has been beneficial, and we hope that you will always continue to study the Word of God to see what the Bible has to say. If you are not a Christian, we hope that you will choose to make that decision to obey the Gospel of Christ.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “CHRIST AND UNITY”

1. For what important thing did Jesus Christ pray in John 17:20ff.?
2. According to Matthew 28:19-20, how many individuals compose the Godhead?
3. In Hebrews 1:8, how is Jesus Christ addressed?
4. In Acts 5:3-4, with whom is the Holy Spirit equated?
5. In Titus 2:13, who is Jesus Christ addressed?
6. What important point did Jesus make in John 14:9?
7. According to Revelation 1:5, what did Jesus do for each of us?
8. According to Hebrews 10:4, what could the blood of bulls and goats not do?
9. When Ephesians 2:14 speaks of Christ having “made both one,” to whom does the one “both” refer?
10. When Ephesians 2:16 speaks of Christ having “reconciled them both to God in one body through the cross,” what is the importance of the phrase, “one body”?
11. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, what is “the body”?
12. According to Colossians 1:18-19, what is “the body”?
13. According to Ephesians 4:4, how many bodies are there?
14. According to 1 Corinthians 12:20, how many bodies are there?
15. According to Acts 11:18, in addition to the Jews, to whom did God grant the right to become members of Christ’s body?
16. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:14, how are people “called” to become members of Christ’s body?
17. What was the main point of Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 12:15-27?
18. What two important points was Paul stressing in 1 Corinthians 12:25?
19. According to Ephesians 1:22, who is the head of the body?
20. According to Matthew 16:18, how many churches did Christ say that He would establish?
21. According to Romans 16:16, what is one scriptural name for the church that Christ established?