

## PROVIDENCE CHURCH

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### **What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity – Part III**

**Pastor Ty Blackburn**

**John 17:21-23**

**October 4, 2015**

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's Gospel, John 17. We continue our study of this Gospel in general, and this prayer in particular. Because John 17 is a prayer of Jesus recorded by the apostles in which Jesus prayed out loud for their benefit, as well as, of course, the purpose of praying to the Father. He wanted them to hear what He prayed and this is prayed the night before His crucifixion. It is the summary, or the summing up basically, of that evening that John has captured for us in John 13-17. Those five chapters are all about that last evening of Jesus with His disciples the night before He was crucified.

It is really something that 20 percent, or over 20 percent, almost 25 percent of the Gospel of John centers on those few hours that are so important in the mind of God, and the Spirit of God, and the heart of John the apostle, to share with us all that Jesus said the night before He was to be crucified, the last words, as it were, of Jesus to the apostles, knowing that the great storm of the cross lay immediately before them. And leaving them, and that is part of what He is telling them throughout this evening is, "I'm going away and where I'm going you can't yet come. You are going to remain here," and He is calling them to go into a world that is hostile to them, that is dark spiritually, opposed to Christ, and opposed to them, opposed to the Gospel, and He is giving them instruction, urging them on into the work. And so, preparing them for it. There is great comfort in that, when you really see that.

You get discouraged about the way things are when you look at the news, see the things that happen in our world. It can certainly be discouraging. There are times I have to turn off the radio, or the television. Just, "I don't need to know any more about that. I know enough now of what is going on. I need to spend some time with the Lord, and remember who is in charge." Because this world is a mess, and it always has been since the fall, and there are times and seasons where it becomes more evident than others. When we look at the darkness deepening in our world, we can be encouraged that the climate that the first apostles went out into with the Gospel, the cultural milieu, or the cultural environment in which they entered to preach Christ, was very much like ours today.

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They had a world which was incredibly dark spiritually. People, in all kinds of religious lies, dominating the landscape, people very opposed to the Gospel. I mean, 10 of the 11 that He is talking to in these last hours would die martyr's deaths. So they went into a world that was very dark, but Jesus gives them great encouragement that their message is going to transcend, and transform lives in the midst of the darkness. And so He encourages them a number of different ways, and in this prayer, we've seen, that He prays for them that God will do some amazing things, that God will protect them from error, that God will sanctify them, make them holy, that God will help them to prepare and anticipate Heaven. But the one thing He prays for above everything else is that they will be unified. He shows that the unity of Christ, the unity of the Church of Christ, is one of the most powerful forces in the world. And we are going to talk today about that unity again.

We've been looking at, the title of our message for the last few weeks is, 'What Jesus Prays For', what Jesus prays for in the passage. This is 'What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity – Part III'. We've been looking at what Jesus prays for, He prays for our unity, and we've looked at that three times now, counting today. Two weeks ago, last week, and then this morning, 'What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity – Part III'.

Today we are going to look at *The Effect of Our Unity*, the effect that our unity has in the world. We are going to see that the effect of our unity is to powerfully authenticate our message. That our oneness has this incredible effectual power to prove the genuineness, to prove the truthfulness, to prove the veracity of what we are saying when we proclaim Christ as the only way to be saved. It is our oneness that actually validates, certifies that what we are saying is true in the minds of an unbelieving and dark world. Now we know it is true, we know it is true in our hearts. The Spirit confirms it, we see it in the word, but there is a sense in which an unbelieving world in the dark, that one of the most powerful forces is our oneness to open their eyes. The effect of our unity is to authenticate our message to show the veracity of the very Gospel we proclaim. Let's read John 17, we'll read Verses 13-26. We're going to be focusing in on Verses 21-23, where we really see oneness and unity spotlighted, but we're going to read Verses 13-26. Here Jesus prays:

***John 17:13-26 ~ But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You to take***

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*them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.*

*20 “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

*22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

*25 “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*

Let's pray together.

*Our Father, as we bow before You, we acknowledge our great need of Your grace. Anytime we come to Your word, come to the holy things of God, we realize that we are inadequate. Lord, our minds are too dark, our wills too alienated. We need Your grace. Open our eyes that we might see wonderful things from Your law, and help us to grapple with these things in a way that would be pleasing to You. Have Your way in our lives. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.*

### 1) The Effect of Our Unity:

*The Effect of Our Unity* is to confirm and authenticate our message, to perfectly validate the truthfulness of the message that Jesus Christ is God's Son, the one and only Savior of the world. Now you step back from this for a moment, because that is what Jesus is saying, twice it says there *...so that the world may believe that*

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***You sent Me...***, in Verse 21. Then in Verse 23, ***...that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me...*** “So that the unity, and the oneness, has this power of helping the world to believe, and the world to know, that You sent Me.” But you step back from it and say, “Why does the message need validation? Why does it need certification or authentication? Why is this even necessary?”

One of the great joys of my heart, as a Christian, and as a pastor, is the longer that I’m in the word, the more convinced I become of the total truthfulness of the Bible, and the beauty and elegance of Scripture, the perfection of it. Every word is God-breathed, and the more that I study it, and the more that I wrestle with it, the more that I come to passages that at first are troubling, unsettling, and then work through it, and study through it, and then see that what I thought at first, found troubling, is actually more wonderful and beautiful than I could have imagined, I become convinced that it is a perfect book. There is no other book like it, nothing comes close.

I like what Francis Schaeffer, the analogy that he uses about the truthfulness of the Bible. He says that in reality, if you think about all of the different religions of the world, you know, many of them have their holy books, right? We have the Bible, Islam has the Quran, the writings of Confucius, or Buddha, and on, and on, and on, and on. If you take a religion, and you take their holy book, and you line them up, and you say, “Now everybody in the world, that is human beings come into the world and living in the world has another book,” and imagine now if I took a book and I tore it in half, had the power to do that. That would be impressive, wouldn’t it? I can tear a couple of pages in half, but tear a book in half? And everybody has the same bottom half of the book, whatever the book is, we have the same bottom half of the book. Imagine you are in a literature class, and you have only the bottom half of the book. It is hard to make sense out of the whole book, isn’t it? You are reading, you read half a page, and then you are missing the next half. You read half a page and you are missing the next half, and so on, and so on. You can’t really make sense, “What is the story?” Everybody in the world, because of natural revelation, because God speaks through nature, because we, in our own experience, day-to-day life, from the time we are born, we learn things about the world. We have an understanding of truth. So everybody basically has the same bottom half of the book. Some people may not be reading it quite as well as others, but we have the same bottom half of the book. And Schaeffer makes the analogy that every religion is an attempt to supply the top half, and there is only one top half that fits, and it is this book right here. It is this book that makes sense out of what we know,

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and what we experience. It is this book that explains how man can be so noble, and do so many wonderful things, how people can give their organs, how people can die for someone else.

You know the man that dove into the river in Washington to save people and then himself died? And then you could also understand how people could do something that happened in Oregon this past week. Senseless brutality, where someone is exalting themselves as God, and taking lives in such a horrible way. The Bible explains that. Man is created in the image of God, good and noble, and yet sin has horribly affected us, and altered us, when you give yourself to sin, and the reality of evil. So the Bible is confirmed and the more that you read of it, the more you see it confirmed.

We'd also add that how can anyone doubt that Jesus Christ is truly the one man sent by God? The one man who speaks authoritatively for God? You know, if you wanted to visit Mohammad's tomb, I don't know if we could do that, because we are *'infidels'*, but Muslims that regularly make the trek to Mecca in Saudi Arabia to visit the tomb where Mohammad's bones lay. You can find, apparently, the burial place of Confucius in China. Though Buddha was burned after death, apparently some of his bones are in Sri Lanka. You can visit a shrine where the remains of Buddha are. But you can't find a place where the remains of Jesus are because He is risen, and He is the only one who is risen. So He stands far above all of the other authorities by virtue of an indestructible life. Now that is so plain and obvious to everyone who looks at it honestly.

I love that history is filled with people who were skeptics, who looked at the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, looked at the evidence for the reality and the veracity of the life of Christ, the reality that He died on the cross, and they started out skeptics, but if they were open-minded, and they looked at the evidence clearly, they became convinced followers of Jesus Christ. I was reading that statement recently by one on the high court of England in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the late 1800s. This was a period where rationalism was at its height, and he wrote that no event in history is more clearly attested, using the canons of legal and historical research, no event in history is more clearly attested than the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now I say that it is so clear that the Bible is the book, it is so clear that Jesus is the one, why don't people see it? Well the Bible gives you the answer to that too. In fact, John's Gospel makes it clear. They don't see it because they don't want to see

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it. They don't see it because they are opposed to it. John has told us throughout his book, this Gospel, starting in Chapter 1. Let's just walk through these verses and look at it.

***John 1:9 ~ There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.***

Speaking of Jesus.

***John 1:10-11 ~ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.***

Chapter 3, Verse 19.

***John 3:19 ~ This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.***

And you see this in the ministry of Jesus because as He makes clearer and clearer who He is, as His proclamation becomes clearer, and as the evidence of His miracles becomes clearer, what do they do? They reject Him more ferociously and finally nail Him to the cross. Not because they don't know who He is, well they act like they don't know who He is, but in reality they do know who He is. Chapter 5, Verse 17, Jesus makes a firm claim. This is when He healed on the Sabbath and the Jews were all upset because He was doing work on the Sabbath. And He says this in Verse 17, this is a claim to deity, they understand it. Verse 17:

***John 5:17 ~ But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." 18 For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.***

They thought He was blaspheming and they recognized He was making a claim to deity, the problem was they didn't keep listening to Him, and keep watching Him with an open mind, and an open heart, because He demonstrates over, and over, and over, that He is who He says He is. He is God. You follow it all the way

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through. In Chapter 7 they are trying to seize Him, they are trying to kill Him. Chapter 8, He actually gets to the heart of the matter, the reason that people reject the truth, and the reason that God, in His grace, has given even this validating reality of our unity to help people to open their hearts to the Gospel is because they are so blinded. Jesus says in Verse 40 of Chapter 8, He says:

***John 8:40 ~ But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.***

They've said they are children of Abraham. He says, "Look, I'm only doing good things. I'm one sent from God. I'm telling you what I've heard from God, and you want to kill Me." Then He says in Verse 41:

***John 8:41-44 ~ You are doing the deeds of your father. "They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.***

What He is saying is that every one of us, by virtue of being the children of Adam, we were born into the world as sinners. We were born into the world hating God, and under the dominion of Satan. This is what the Bible teaches clearly. And being under the dominion of Satan, Satan, as it says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, has blinded the eyes of our hearts, lest we see with our eyes, and believe. So we are blind because of our father, and we need an act of God's grace and power to open our eyes. So with that understanding then, there is this need on the part of unbelievers to have a supernatural act of God to give them an understanding of the truth.

So we come back to our outline, there are two points in the outline this morning. We are looking at again *The Effect of Our Unity*, and the two points are, number one, *The Content of Our Message*, because remember, *The Effect of Our Unity* is to validate our message. The first point is, *The Content of Our Message*, and the second point is *The Confirmation of Our Message*. *The Content of Our Message* and *The Confirmation of Our Message*.

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### 1) The Content of Our Message:

Now, it is important that we take a moment to look at *The Content of Our Message*. There it is again, we have a summary of the Gospel message, as it were, a very brief, distilled summary of the Gospel message there in Verse 21 and Verse 23, because the key phrase we are looking at in John 17 and Verse 21 is ***...so that the world may believe that You sent Me***. The idea is that ***...they may be one, even as We are one,...*** ***...so that the world may believe that You sent Me***. Verse 23:

***John 17:23 ~ ...that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me,...***

What is it that the world comes to know when we are unified? What is it that the world comes to believe when we are unified? It is, ***...that You sent Me,...*** Jesus says, “What they will know is that You sent Me. When the people that I have chosen, brought to Myself, are one, then the world will know that You sent Me.” So that the summary of the Gospel, the content of the Gospel that He is talking about here is simply those three words, ***...You sent Me,...*** Our message, the truly Christian message is that Jesus of Nazareth is the one and only person sent by God, the one and only person sent by God into the world to make God known. The one and the only person sent by God to bring salvation. Our message is that He is unique, the one and only. The key word in John’s Gospel is the word ‘sent’, 45 times Jesus refers to Himself, or in this way, the one *sent* by the Father. The word ‘sent’ occurs 45 times in that kind of context. Here it is, ***...You sent Me,...*** ***...You sent Me,...*** Other places it is, ***...the Father sent Me...*** He speaks of as He is talking to others. We have it five times in the passage, John 17:3, beginning in prayer He says:

***John 17:3 ~ This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.***

Verse 8.

***John 17:8 ~ or the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that (What?) You sent Me.***

Verse 18.



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***John 17:18 ~ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.***

And then Verses 21 and 23 we looked at a moment ago, “that they may believe that You sent Me,” or “that they may know that You sent Me.” There are two sub-points under *The Content of Our Message*. Two sub-points, what is it, this summary of the Gospel concerns? First of all, *The Unique Origin of Jesus*, and secondly, *The Unique Authority of Jesus*. *The Unique Origin of Jesus* and *The Unique Authority of Jesus*.

### A) The Unique Origin of Jesus:

To be sent from the Father means to be sent from Heaven. That is, that Jesus is uniquely sent from Heaven. He has a message that is an other-worldly message. People strain to hear spiritual messages. People strain to hear from God. You know, I mean, you drive down the road and you see signs for people, you know, psychic reading. Don't ever go into one of those places. At best, it is probably a charlatan looking to steal some money from you. The worst case is there really is some demonic activity going on there, and you don't want to be a part of it. Now as a Christian, you can't be hurt by that, but you should not partake of that. It is evil. We don't need that, even if they had any, they don't have any answers, but if they did, we don't need them. We have all the answers we need from God and His word. But people go to psychics, they look to astrology, they read the writings of new age gurus, they get videos from all these different people telling them, hoping to hear from God, to tap into the divine. Even those who don't believe in God are looking for some message from some higher life form.

I mentioned this before, sometime, it's been a while back, I guess, but one of the things that I remember reading some years back was about 'The Mushroom Patch'. Have you heard of that? 'The Mushroom Patch' is a name that pilots have given to an area in New Mexico where the United States Space Program has hundreds of these giant satellite dishes, all pointing toward Heaven, and from the sky, flying over it, it covers the area of Washington, D.C. It is a big area, you know, just one after another, after another, all these different satellite dishes facing up, listening, and pilots flying over that refer to that as 'The Mushroom Patch'. It looks like a mushroom patch from the heavens.

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Well, in the 1970s they built it, and at some point in the 90s, they were listening for some message from extraterrestrials, from some higher, evolved species out there. Listening to radio waves. When they summed up, it was 20 plus years, I haven't heard the latest on this, maybe it is a little higher now, but they listened for 20 years, if you added up all the radio signals that had come in, the volume of them, if you added all of those 20 years, 365 days a year, it would add up to the sound of a snowflake hitting the ground. Twenty years of listening, "Is there anyone out there? Is there anyone out there?" We have one who has come down from Heaven, and has brought to us an authoritative message.

We read earlier what He said in John 8, right before He told us of our need to be born again, when He says we are of our father, the devil, until we are saved. He said, *...I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.* He's saying, "Look, I've come down from God." In Chapter 6 in Verse 38 Jesus said:

***John 6:38 ~ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.***

Chapter 3, when He was talking to Nicodemus in Verse 13, He says to Nicodemus:

***John 3:13 ~ No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.***

"No one has gone up into Heaven to find out from God what is going on, but there is one who has come down, the Son of Man." Later on in that same chapter, in Verses 31-32:

***John 3:31-32 ~ "He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32 What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.***

The reality is that the message that we have is that Jesus Christ has unique origin. There is no one else like Him. No one else has come from God, from Heaven. So *The Content of our Message*, that is the first sub-point, *The Unique Origin*.

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### B) The Unique Authority of Jesus:

Secondly though, *The Unique Authority of Jesus*. Because He has a unique origin, He has a unique authority. I mentioned the word ‘sent’ that is 45 times in the book, and five times in this passage. All five occurrences in John 17, the word ‘sent’ is the word ‘*apostello*’. ‘*Apo*’ means ‘*away from, or from*’. ‘*Stello*’ means ‘*sent*’. And the idea is ‘*to be sent away from someone, sent with authority*’. *Apostello*, the noun formed from that is the noun ‘*apostle*’. We transliterate the Greek word into English word ‘*apostle*’. The apostles were those who were sent from Christ with His authority. So when Jesus says, “Father, You sent Me,” and He is using *apostello*, “You sent Me. I’m the one You sent.” He is saying, “I’m the one who has been sent *with authority*. I’m the one who has the authority to speak for God. No one else does.” John 1:18, the beginning of John’s Gospel, he shares this wonderful verse. It sounds a lot like what we read earlier from 1 John 4, when he said in John 1:18, John commenting about Jesus says:

***John 1:18 ~ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.***

No one has seen God at any time but the only begotten God, the only begotten Son, He has made Him known. The idea that *declared* is literally exegeted in the Greek. That is the English transliteration. He has let out the meaning. He has let out the truth of who God is. Jesus has made God known. In John 14:6 then:

***John 14:6 ~ “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.***

So the unique authority of Jesus Christ is bound up in His unique origin. The content of our message is there is only one way. That’s not a hate crime to say that. I mean, it would be like saying if you know there’s one cure for cancer, but somebody else likes their chemo. It’s a hate crime to tell them, “Hey, there’s a better way. You can actually be cured.” Chemo doesn’t cure cancer. It just kills a bunch of cells, and hopefully it kills more of the bad stuff than it does the good, right? We thank God for that. I’m not trying to put down chemo, but if there was something that you could take that cured it, would you want to know about it, if you had cancer? Of course. The pharmaceutical companies might think it was a hate crime for you to tell somebody about that, because they want to keep selling their product, right? I mean, hopefully the best of them hopefully wouldn’t be that way, but I could see where certainly in a world like ours, there would be many who

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would so want their money, that they would want to outlaw that, hide it, give us some time to get out of this investment we put over here.

It's not a hate crime to tell people that the way of salvation, there's only one, and it is perfect. It's Jesus Christ. We are tolerant. Biblical tolerance is to accept people, and to be kind to people, and to respect people who have a different opinion. It's not to maintain that all opinions are equal. That's not tolerance and never has been. That's pluralism. The message of the Gospel is there is only one way to Heaven, and it's through Jesus Christ, because our malady, the cancer of the soul is so great that it can't be helped along by just surface cures. The sin that racks the soul is so deep that we need a Savior that is mighty to save, and Jesus Christ came into the world, and this is how He saved. He came into the world fully God. God's Son comes and takes on true human flesh, and He lives a complete human life, a perfect human life, 30+ years of perfect obedience to God, never once sinning, and able to offer to God a perfect righteousness. And then at Calvary what happens is the Father transfers the sins of everyone who would ever believe, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. He's the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The Father credits our sins to Christ, and then He treats Jesus as if He had lived our sinful and wicked lives, and He pours out His holy wrath against sin, upon His Son, because our God is holy and He must punish evil. Isn't it good that He's holy and that He must punish evil? The people who do heinous acts should be brought to justice. Isn't it good that God's like that? Wouldn't it be terrible to be in a world where people went unpunished, where they were not even tracked down? They killed people and nobody even cared. "Hey, it's okay. We've got to let it go. Judge not, lest you be judged." No, God is holy and He must punish sin. And so He punishes our sins fully in His own Son. He stands in the way of our wrath and He bears our wrath in His own body on the cross, and He pays our sin debt in full. And then He's buried. He dies and He's buried, and on the third day He rises again, because He is holy. In himself, death has no power over Him, and in His resurrection He gives us perfect righteousness. It's amazing. We exchange our sins for His perfect record of righteousness. And now we are holy and He can look at us as if we had never sinned. Not only that, He can look at us as if we had lived a perfect life of righteousness.

I love that line in the song. *For God the just is satisfied to look on Him and pardon me.* God is just in that. Isn't that beautiful? That's the Gospel message. That's the content of our message—unique in origin, unique authority, and now we come to the point, the confirmation of our message, so that the world may believe the message that we preach.

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### 2) The Confirmation of Our Message:

“They need to be one, Father. I pray that they might be one.” He prays this again and again, really four different times in the passage, in Verse 11, Verse 21, Verse 22, and Verse 23, each time praying for our oneness, our unity, because it authenticates the message. Now, how does it do that? How does it prove the genuineness of our message? Our message is Jesus is from Heaven. Jesus is from God. Our message is that there is an other-worldly, divine way of salvation. What happens is when you and I learn to love each other the way God Himself loves us, then there is a supernatural and divine quality about our love. When we have the oneness, what we saw last time, the standard for our oneness is the same oneness that the Trinity has. We’re to be one just as the Father is one with the Son, as it says there in Verse 21:

***John 17:21 ~ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You,...***

***John 17:22 ~ ...that they may be one, just as We are one;...***

You and I are to have relationships, those of us in the body of Christ who truly belong to Jesus, we are to love one another and to have relationships that are like the relationship the Father has with the Son. Now, if our oneness is the oneness of the Trinity, then there is the savor of the supernatural about our relationships. There would be the aroma of Heaven about our relationships. People around us, if they see our love is the love of God Himself, there then is a supernatural and divine quality to our relationships. Our very relationships say, “You’re telling us you have a heavenly message. You’re telling us you have an authoritative message, a divine message, and your life bears witness to it,” because you have a supernatural and divine love. It adorns our doctrine.

Now, how do you go about pursuing this kind of oneness? It’s one thing to talk about it in theory, but how do you experience it in practice? We noted before that you don’t manufacture it. You don’t work it up. You don’t produce it. We can’t make this kind of unity. We don’t produce it. We partake of it. We don’t make it. We experience it and then share it. If our oneness is patterned after the oneness of the Trinity, let’s try to unpack that a little bit what that means. He’s saying in Verse 21:

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***John 17:21 ~ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You,...***

***John 17:22 ~ ...that they may be one, just as We are one;...***

The comparative adverb there *even as*, or translated *just as*, ***...that they may be one, just as We are one;...*** means *in the same way as* that our oneness may be in the same way the Father is one with the Son. Let's think about the relationship of the Father and the Son, and think of three things. I want you to think about the relationship. These are three essential ingredients to real, loving relationship. The first is knowledge, and the second is love, and the third is honor. There's knowledge, love, and honor. Other things could be added in, but for our purposes, we'll limit ourselves to those three.

The Father has perfect knowledge of the Son. He knows the Son perfectly. That's knowledge. He loves the Son completely, and He honors the Son joyfully. The Father knows everything about the Son, and He loves Him with all of His heart, and He honors Him with great joy. Now, that's what's supposed to be true of you and me. By God's grace, we're supposed to be able to know one another more and more perfectly, love one another more and more completely, and honor one another more and more joyfully. There's a big problem here. When Jesus looks at the Father and the Father looks at the Son, what do they see? They see perfect loveliness. I mean, to look at one another is to delight in one another, isn't it? You see that. The Father looks at the Son and He delights in the Son. "That's My Son, whom I love, with whom I'm well-pleased." Jesus looks at the Father when He's working and doing miracles, and He says, "Listen, the things that I'm doing are what the Father does. You need to know the Father. He is wonderful." So there is this reciprocity of love that's rooted in perfect knowledge, complete love, and joyful honor.

But if you and I get to know each other more and more, if you get to know me, you're going to learn more and more things not to like about me. "I didn't know he was like that." Have you been around people and maybe you've had a great relationship until you play some game? Have you ever had that experience? You play cards and suddenly, "Wow, I didn't realize that he was so competitive." Or, "She really takes that seriously, doesn't she?" They may be saying the same thing about you. We get to know each other and we see the warts. We get to know each other and we see the flaws. If we know one another perfectly, we're not going to love one another completely or want to honor one another joyfully. It seems like

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it's going to be the opposite. Well, it would be, if that was all there was to it. If God just said, "You all go do it like I've laid the pattern out. Follow it." Thankfully that's not the way He calls us to do it. I said earlier you can't manufacture it. You can't work it up. The way he calls us to do it is you can't give what you have not experienced. And the way that you give love to someone else is you must be loved by God perfectly. You experience His love. As He says in 1 John, "We love Him because He first loved us." You experience His love. You're overwhelmed by His love, and then you give your love back to Him. And what does He say? I say, "Father, I want to love You." He says, "Love My children." That's how it works.

In fact, let's think about that for a moment. And actually there's a key to it in the passage here, an amazing thing Jesus says in Verse 23. He's repeating what He said in Verse 21 in the prayer, remember? He's saying:

***John 17:21 ~ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.***

That's what He says in Verse 21, remember? ***...believe that You sent Me...*** In Verse 23 He says:

***John 17:23 ~ ... that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me,...***

But look what He says after that. This is what's amazing. Not just ***...so that the world may know that You sent Me...***

***John 17:23 ~ ...so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.***

That *even as* is the same comparative adverb translated in Verse 21 and Verse 22 as *just as*. He's saying, "Father, I pray that they'll be one, and in their being one, the world is going to see that You loved them. He's talking about the people of God. This is true for every person who's a Christian, for every person who's repented and believed in Christ, or for every person who will repent and believe in Christ. What He's saying is that the Father loves you in exactly the same way as He loves His Son. Precisely the way He loves His Son, He loves you. He loves me. Think about the delight the Father has in the Son. The Son only pleases the Father all the time. Remember in John 4 when Jesus is talking to the woman at the well.

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They come back and they saw Him talking and the woman has left, and they're saying, "Jesus, are you hungry?" because they went to get food. He says, "No, I'm not hungry. I have food that you don't know about." They're like, "What? Did somebody give Him food? Do You have a Twix bar or something?" He says, "No, My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him who sent Me." He says, "What satisfies Me when I'm hungry..." think about that. When you're really hungry, isn't it funny how when you're really hungry, it's hard to think about anything else? This is a bad thing to bring up at the end of a sermon. Pray for grace right now that we will all be able to think about what we really need to think about, which is the spiritual hunger.

But when you're really hungry, it's hard to think about anything else, but Jesus says, "Listen, what I long for more than anything else is to do the will of My Father. What satisfies My soul, what thrills Me, is to do the will of My Father." Imagine a Son like that, how a Father would feel about a Son like that. That is how the Father feels about the Son. He delights in the Son. It's a perfect righteousness. When He sees Jesus, His heart leaps with joy and pride and delight, and the wonder of it is, and we need to learn to drink deeply from this reality, if you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, when He sees you, His heart leaps with delight. How can that be? And He knows you perfectly. He knows me perfectly. He knows our sin, but He's chosen in His perfect economy of righteousness to count all of our sins to Christ's account, and He's taken them out of the way. He's removed them as far as the east is from the west, He says in Psalm 103. He didn't say north and south. There's a distance between north and south. The east and the west are infinite. He remembers them no more. He really doesn't. When He looks at you, He looks at the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. He looks at a child of God now clothed in garments that say, "My meat and my drink is to do Your will."

Now, we know that on a daily basis we don't live like that, but you're standing before your Father. You're clothed in that, and when He sees you, He sees you through the perfect righteousness of Christ, and His heart is thrilled and moved with love, only love continually, toward you. Now, He may discipline you because you need discipline, but His heart is unchanged. His heart is delighting in you even as He disciplines you. Think about how you love your child, and when you discipline your child how hard it is to administer Godly discipline. It hurts you. It really is true to say that it hurts you more than it hurts them, when you really love your child. But you do it trusting that God's way is right, and this is what's going to be best for the child, and you do it loving them. And you long for that moment when there's that communion where they repent and come back to you.



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Well, if we being evil do that, how much more does your Father love you with a perfect love even when He disciplines you? This is why Paul can say, “If God did not spare His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how will He not together with Him freely give us all things?” What He’s saying is if God gave His Son, He proved His love with such intensity, that every moment of every day He is blessing, and blessing, and blessing from a heart that delights in, and delights in, and delights in His children. Every moment, no matter what happens, that is the Father’s heart toward you in Christ, and nothing can change that.

Now, when you drink deeply from that, when you really meditate on that and believe that, “This is what God says. It doesn’t feel that way when I look at my life.” It doesn’t matter what you feel. Why would you trust your feelings? There’s this whole nonsense about everything in society that people trust their feelings. That is the stupidest thing to do. “I feel like I’m a boy, but I’m a girl.” Well, who cares what you feel like? God made you a girl, and if you’ll just wait long enough, it’ll all come back around if you’ll just give yourself time. Your feelings, you may not feel like God loves you, but He says He loves you perfectly in Christ. And if you meditate on that and you receive that, the wonder of that begins to grip you. You realize that Jesus Christ has purchased this for me. He gave Himself for me that I could be loved like He’s loved by the Father, and the Father is loving me like He loves His Son. How can it be that Thou my God shouldst die for me? Amazing love, and when you stand in the wake of that kind of love and you feel that kind of love flowing over you, you must give back that love. “I’ve got to love You, God.” That’s why we need to labor for that kind of assurance of that love. God wants you to live in this place knowing His love like that. And when you know His love like that, your heart is full and overflowing.

Think about how when you love somebody, what you want to do for them. What wouldn’t you do for them? And we are sinful and evil. God feels that way toward us. What He wouldn’t do for us... And then when you as a Christian, born again now, “What can I do to show You my love?” He says, “See that person? Do you see your brother?” “Yeah, I see all those flaws. You mean that one that offended me yesterday, last week, two months ago?” “Yeah, that’s the one I’m talking about.” Listen, if he’s a Christian, your Father feels the same way about him as He feels about you. He absolutely is thrilled when He looks at that child. You say, “I see some real problems here.” God says, “Stop doing the accounting that way. I treat him the same way I treat you, all of his sin credited to Christ, all of Christ’s perfect righteousness credited to him, and I am delighted in him. I love him. I’m thrilled with him. Go and bless him. Get to know him more. Choose to delight in

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him more.” “You see, the problem is...” Wait, no. Just focus on how God sees him. This is a brother in Christ. This is one for whom Christ died. This is a sister in Christ. This is one for whom Christ died. God shed His own blood for this precious child. And now you find that you are able to love them with the love that’s flowing out of you toward them, and you’re able to honor them joyfully, and you serve them freely. And it’s a supernatural love flowing through you to them. It’s not a human worked up love. And when we start learning to do that to one another, when people offend each other, this is why I’ve said before, when you have a really horrible breach in a relationship where there’s real damage done, and somebody says, “It’ll never be the same. It can never be like it was,” and they say that in pronouncing it as like the obituary of the relationship, that’s where we need to lovingly in Christ say, “If you’re a Christian and they’re a Christian, you’re right. It’ll never be like it was. It can never be the same, but it can be wondrously, gloriously better than it’s ever been.” You say, “Well, how?” Because of the love of God. The love of God has been poured out in our hearts, and if you will abide in the love of God, and you will see that person—I love what Peter says in 1 Peter. He says, “When you’re reviled, revile not again, but give a blessing, knowing that they were called to inherit a blessing.” In that situation he’s talking about when you’re hurt by another believer, give a blessing, knowing that that person was called to inherit a blessing. This is your inheritance. You may have sinfully given into the flesh and hurt me, but you’re a child of God. I want to bless you back, because you are created for a blessing.

When we drink deeply and continually of the love of our Father, and we express personally and practically, we should be drinking of the love of God deeply and continually, and then express it personally and practically. I think it’s helpful to think of this: When you drink in the love of God, we always need to pray and praise God. So express it personally. “Father, I love You so much. I love You so much.” Don’t just sit there and think, “How wonderful it is that God loves me like that.” See, I’m down here. I’ve turned it into worship. But that’s expressing it personally. Practically, “I love You so much. How can I bless You?” And the Lord is like us. If you want to love me and you want to express love for me, love my children. Bless them. That’s what the Father says. “If you want to love Me, bless My children.” Practically, that’s how you put shoes on it. You walk it out. That’s the wonder of the Love of God. And He says when this happens, when we’re able to overlook offenses, and put aside the breaches in relationships, and overcome by the love of God, the oneness of the Trinity becomes real in our lives. There comes the ability then to see the flaw in the other person. We’re not pretending that they don’t have flaws. We see it and we can say, “Hey, there’s a weakness here, but I

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see the beauty of all that God is doing in your life, and that swallows it up, and I'm honoring you even as I'm trying to help you with a problem. I see so much beauty and potential in your life." That is the picture of the co-inherence of the Trinity. They see each other perfectly. They love each other fully. They honor each other joyfully. That is what we are to do—to know each other more and more perfectly, to love each other more and more completely, and to honor and serve each other more and more joyfully, and when that happens the world will take notice. People will begin to say there's something about them. God is real, and Jesus Christ is truly who He says He is, the only Savior of sinners.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

*Father, we confess that we are unable to even adequately contemplate the wonder of the realities that we tried to look at this morning, that we could have relationships that are to be a picture of Heaven. It seems far too glorious, far too amazing, and we so far away from that. Have mercy on us, Lord. We thank You that even in that, our failures to love, our failures to care about one another, to serve one another, to spend ourselves for one another, it's so selfish, so preoccupied, and yet even there we come amazed that those things have been nailed to the cross and are removed forever, and that when we come in repentance to the cross again, we're reminded that there You are looking at us with delight and honor as if we had lived the perfect life of Your Son. What amazing grace.*

*Father, help us, though, those who belong to Jesus today, to repent and to walk in this amazing love, the height, and the width, and the length, and the breadth, to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, and to be filled up with all the fullness of God. And for those here that have not tasted true salvation, may today be the day that You bring them to Yourself. Break every resistance in their hearts. Draw them through repentance and faith, to the cross of Your Son and to the freedom in Him. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

"What Jesus Prays For – Our Unity – Part III"

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