

The Tanner St Church of Christ meets each Lord's Day beginning with Bible classes at **9:30 AM**. We continue with our worship at **10:20 AM** and again at **5:00 PM**. We also meet each Wednesday evening at **7:00 PM** for Bible study and worship. Our meeting place is located about ¾ of a mile from I30 at 1512 Tanner St in Malvern, AR.

If you have questions about what we believe and teach, please visit our website, tannerst.com to listen to sermons or read past articles from our bulletin. Or you can contact us and we will be glad to find a convenient time to study with you.

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Consider: Romans 10:9-10

Needed News

Joyce Venable, Dolline Fain and **Conrad Harris** continue to deal with their respective health issues. **Dolline** is doing some better. Her daughter, Rhonda Kidder, said she is beginning to notice some short term memory issues. **Conrad** is still taking weekly cancer treatments. One of their sons came down this week to help with things around the house.

Paula Laubach is dealing with a swollen ankle from a fall in addition to her respiratory problems.

Jordan Wright is doing much better.

Ricky Ragsdale is in a nursing home for therapy.

Phyllis Jackson is in California this week.

Are you still reading your Bible daily? Often we start the year with a plan to read every day, but by the middle of summer we have begun to miss more and more days. Spring and summer bring opportunity for more outdoor activities as well as noticing more work is needed to keep up our homes. This can lead to less time that is available to sitting down for our Bible reading. Maybe an audio Bible would help you get back on track. Make sure you spend sufficient time in God's Word.

Seeking His Righteousness

"...seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.." Matthew 6:33

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Unity in Christ

Bobby Graham

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

John 17:20-23

With these words Jesus moved from petitions concerning the apostles to requests on behalf of all disciples in that prayer on the night before his betrayal and arrest. The leading thought, and therefore the primary request, involved the oneness of all disciples.

The unity of the people of God has always been highly valued by the Lord himself and by all who were trying to be partakers of the Divine nature. In the words of the one hundred thirty-third Psalm, the unity of the brethren is both good and pleasant. Its value is compared to the precious ointment of Aaron and the dew that watered the mountains of Zion. All who claim to love the Lord should be as concerned about the kind of unity that the Lord prizes as is He.

Ours is a time when there is fervent concern for the oneness of all believers, but the oneness most often sought is not the kind that the Lord values and that the Bible describes. It is sometimes described as unity in diversity. People calling themselves by the same religious name but believing and practicing differently, however, can be no more united than a herd of wild horses scattering in different directions. At times they might run together, but their inclinations are so divided that they are apart more than they are together. If this kind

of unity is even achieved, it will be done to the later distress and fracture of all involved; for Bible unity requires a true oneness in recognition of the Divine standard so that all human inclinations and ideas inconsistent with that standard or with the unity of saints can be mortified and surrendered to the will of God as expressed in the Word of God. If men are not ready to lay aside their ideas in order to accept God's idea, then they have no idea of what Bible unity is.

The Importance of Unity

In the verses quoted from the prayer of Jesus at the outset of the article, the Son of God made several points concerning His kind of unity. Verse twenty suggests something of the importance of unity.

The oneness under consideration in this passage is of the utmost importance, as suggested by its inclusion as a petition in Jesus' prayer. The place of the prayer at the end of the earthly ministry of the Lord also indicates that Jesus' mission had been spent in doing all that He could to make this unity possible and was now approaching the cross for the same purpose. How important this unity must be in view of all of this!

The Key to Unity

All recognize that unless they are willing to use the key, they cannot unlock and open the door. It is likewise impossible for men to be united unless they use the key provided by the Lord. According to Jesus' prayer in verse twenty, the key to oneness is faith in Him. It is evident that there can be no oneness between the believer and the infidel because the common ground of faith is absent. It is no more possible for the child of God and the member of a human denomination to be united, for the same key is missing — faith in Jesus Christ. Although both consent to the fact of Jesus' sonship, both do not have a faith of the kind that God approves. Faith in Jesus whom God sent necessarily involves faith in the word which Jesus spoke and that which the apostles spoke. Jesus said, in fact, that men believe on Him through the preached word of the apostles. Here is the basis for Bible unity. Men unwilling to stand on all taught by the Lord and His apostles and on that word alone cannot be one, for in some areas there will be invariable division as a result of their acceptance of varying standards.

The Kind of Unity

That Bible unity is not unity in diversity can be seen in verse twenty-one. Here Jesus compared the unity of disciples to that existing

between the Father and himself. It is a unity of plan or purpose, heart, and attitude. When all disciples are genuinely committed to the will of God and develop the attitude of faith that will accept unreservedly what the Bible says, they can be as one. Jesus' dedication to the will of God is seen in His prayer in Gethsemane when He said, "... nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

The Purpose of Unity

Jesus said that disciples ought to be united so that the world might believe that He was sent by the Father. (Verses 21 and 23.) The historic division of the world into diverse religious bodies stands as a barrier to belief on the part of many, as does the fracture of those claiming to compose the church of Christ. Complete unity is not affirmed to be the panacea to lead all men to believe, but it would help to persuade some.

Jesus also said in verse twenty-three that the oneness of His disciples would help the world to know that God loved all, even as He had loved Jesus. In believing that God sent Jesus, the world will also come to believe the purpose of His coming — to display the love of God to the world.

A Stimulus to Unity

Jesus said that He had given to the disciples the glory that He had been given by the heavenly Father. Verse twenty-four shows that He is speaking of the offer of eternal glory. Verse twenty-two says that Jesus made this offer of glory so that disciples might be united. A consideration of the glory belonging to the faithful on the other side should move us to fulfill the will of the Lord in this matter.

A Necessity for Unity

In the seventeenth verse Jesus prayed for the sanctification of His apostles by means of the Word of truth. He set the example of sanctification for the benefit of His chosen ones. (Verse 19). If there was a need for the apostles to be sanctified (devoted) by means of the Word so that they might enter upon their Divine mission of preaching the gospel, is there not also the same need for all, because belief comes about as a result of the Word that the inspired preached? We all must be devoted to God's Word as revealed, devoted to it as adequate to supply us unto all that is good (**2Timothy 3:17**), and devoted to it as the basis for Bible unity.