

## Perfecting in Unity

As we look at the manifestation of the Kingdom, we see that there are commitments we must make to relationship for it to become a reality. From **John 17:23** we saw in the previous article that our commitment to God, our commitment to one another, and our commitment to see the world touched with the power of the gospel form the foundation for Kingdom manifestation.

In this segment, we want to take a closer look at the unity that results from our commitment to one another and begin to see its function as a key in releasing the power of God into the world. We have all been around Church enough to know that unity can be illusive and at times seem out of reach. However, if unity really is necessary for the world to know King Jesus, then it must become a priority in our thinking.

Let us start back two verses in **John 17:21** – *“that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.”* The question here becomes obvious. Who is in whom? Jesus describes the oneness of the Godhead as literally being in each other. The Father being in the Son and the Son being in the Father; so then, where are we? This verse tells us that we are in Him. This is good news because God sees us through the righteousness of His Son.

Verse 23 tells us that He is in us. His dwelling in us empowers us to live together in unity and do His work. When I apply this to my relationships in the body I find a truth here that will produce unity. *What we need for completion is in each other!* What I need to be complete is in you. The imperfections in you are hidden in Christ and the Christ in you will cause us to walk together. *Conversely*, what you need to be complete is in me; the imperfections in me are hidden in Christ, and you need the Christ in me who lives out through me.

The goal of our relationship with Christ and the presence of His glory are to produce Godhead-like unity which will impact the world. **John 17:22** *“And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one.”* The Godhead exists as three different persons with different roles, responsibilities, and characteristics yet completely one. In nature we see an example of this in water which exists as liquid, solid and gas – water, ice and steam – three manifestations of the same element but one in substance.

God wants His church to function in the same kind of unity. We ask for His Glory but perhaps we have not understood that glory looks a lot like unity. The more Glory, the more unity. As we see revival break out it is going to look a lot like unity. One of the significant manifestations of God’s glory in the United States was during the Cane Ridge revival. At times as many as seven preachers from different denominations were preaching at the same time in a huge open field, some standing on a log, others from the back of a wagon (all experiencing similar results). There were all kinds of manifestations of the Spirit, and it is estimated that as many as 25,000 came out of the back woods to the open field to experience what God was doing.

The unity flowing from the life of the Spirit saw more than 10,000 added to the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches during this period. Barton Stone, one of the key figures during the later part of this revival, has on his grave stone his life motto “let unity be our polar star.”

This may not be the way we would state it, but in his letter to the Ephesians Paul speaks of unity as a goal that we can and will attain. **Eph 4:13** “...*until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*”

The word “attain” here is defined as: to arrive at, to reach a goal. We have not as yet reached it; but we can and must pursue it until we do. We must see unity as an attainable goal; it is the prayer of Jesus. So our expectation should be that **the closer we get to Him, the more unity will become a reality**. Maturity is described here in a context of unity. Maturity that moves us toward the fullness of Christ should also bring us to unity.

The context of this pursuit of unity is the release of the five-fold ministry gifts. When Christ ascended, we understand that He divided His fullness into five distinct ministries. Each gift then is a part and only a part of who He is. No individual gift is complete in itself; *we need each other*. In fact, each gift is incomplete by design. The goal of unity can only be achieved through the correct application and understanding of this diversity. The body of Christ needs the revelation that only when we function together are we complete. The application of this will bring us to a unity that is real and not contrived.

One of the reasons unity has been so difficult to achieve is that the church has attempted to orchestrate a ‘*lowest common denominator*’ unity which excludes any presence or role for the five-fold ministry gifting in the process. In this season I believe that God is going to bring His ministry gifts into new relationships with each other and begin to teach them to function together. This is going to bring about an interdependence, previously unattainable, which will form the foundation for real team ministry.

When we know that we are incomplete without each other, we will begin to value each other in a new way. We will value our different perspectives and seek to learn from each other’s strengths. We will also be careful to cover weaknesses rather than expose them. The byproduct will be a genuine honor of one another.

Earlier in Ephesians Paul gives us the correct attitude in our pursuit of unity, **Eph 4:3** “*being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” Unity is to be preserved. The bond of unity, especially in its infancy, is fragile; it only takes a careless word or a foolish action to cause people to pull away from each other. Paul calls on us to be diligent to preserve unity. The Greek word preserve has several important meanings:

- To attend carefully to
- To keep in view
- To apply ones self to
- To guard from loss or injury
- To prevent from escaping

The idea here is that when you see unity, focus on preserving it. If you have ever tried to light a fire with a flint, you know that when you see the spark light the tender, your immediate response must be to preserve the flame. For true unity to be maintained we must understand that it requires diligence. Unity doesn't just happen. Yes, it is a work of the Holy Spirit, but it requires something. **Diligence!** The Greek word used here means:

- To make haste or to hurry something on
- To treat it seriously or respectfully
- To become proficient
- To put in work, effort or zeal

From the definition we see that we must make unity a priority. We need to treat it seriously to the point that we become proficient. This requires a new mindset and a refocusing of priorities. Peter tells us in **2 Peter 1:5** to "*apply diligence to our faith.*"

The challenge is to direct our faith to a realization and understanding of Kingdom-minded unity that includes the proper function and interaction of the five-fold ministry, which will allow the message of Christ to penetrate the nations. We have been diligent about many things, but have we actively pursued the unity that the King requires.