

COMMUNION MEDITATION  
"Unity or Conformity"  
John 17:20, 21

March 3 1986

INTRODUCTION

1. The prayer life of our Lord for His own will forever be remembered. He really prayed with fervency (Mt. 14:23; Lk 22:44). May we do the same!

2. Often those who do not pray do not know what to pray for. The text is an excellent example of what to be burdened for: the unity, not conformity, of His own in demonstration.

3. To fulfill our Lord's prayer burden, three items are mentioned. Note them:-

1. The PEOPLE concerned v. 20

a. Identified

The disciples are set out as "these alone." They were right there with Him. He ceased not to pray for them. Yet upcoming generations of believers are also prayed for since they are part of all believers of this Age of Grace.

b. Marked

A distinguishing feature of future believers is recorded by the phrase "believe in Me." Faith is the one factor God calls men to exercise to be saved (Jn 6:28, 29). Without faith, one cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). But faith is not a leap in the dark. Rather, faith is the exercise of the heart's confidence upon a Person and His work, even the Lord Jesus Christ. The present tense verb points up that our Lord already saw this group in existence, altho they were future in respect to personal belief. The victory of Calvary is clearly given. Hallelujah! The prepositional phrase "on Me" shows that belief is an active concept.

c. Directed

The Lord shows that faith is not unrelated to a witness. The term "word" implies an exposition of the significance of the facts relating to the Lord Jesus. It is noted by this phrase that God uses means to bring about His spiritual goals for lost men. This is true theism and not fatalism. Hence missionary work is advanced here. Faith comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17) and this presumes a preacher (Rom. 10:14) and this expects a sender (Rom. 10:15). Peter confirmed the need for the Word (1 Pet. 1:23).

2. The PATTERN designed v. 21

a. Essentially

The word "one" points up essential unity. While no one is really competent to fully define the nature of this unity, Scripture terms are best to employ. Body truth is therefore in view (1 Cor. 12:12, 13) and is advanced by Paul (Eph. 2:14-16; Gal. 3:28). It is not a matter of unanimity for that would require concord of opinion. It is not uniformity for that requires complete similarity of practice. It is not union for that would require affiliation without individual agreement. The unity here is that of the inner heart and essential purpose made possible through a common interest and common life in the Lord Jesus. The unity is spiritual and not organizational hence not ecumenical. We don't make it--He does, but we do "keep" it (Eph. 4:3).

b. Universally

The unity here is for "all," hence at once world-wide and all inclusive. Every conceivable barrier is bridged (Gal. 3:26-28). The spiritual unity of believers in one new man is the issue (Eph. 2:15).

c. Celestially

The comparison for this unity is that of the Godhead. As the Father and Son are "one" so believers are "one in us." A spiritual organism patterned after the trinity is in view. Obviously, there is an inter-relationship among believers in this unity. The figure of the Body of Christ is crucial (1 Cor. 12).

3. The PURPOSE attended v. 21

The previous item of unity and a godless world believing are both purpose clauses. But the unity purpose gives rise to the world purpose in believing that the Father sent the Son. Oh, to allow the Word to provoke unto a witness!

CONCLUSION

Our Lord is burdened that His mission will not be in vain. God grant that our relationships may exhibit the truth of this prayer. Amen.