

Prayer for Unity

Jeff Rogers / Lamplighter Bible Study

John 17:17-19

It is only hours until He will be taken into custody by a mob of the religious elite led by Judas Iscariot. He will then be put on trial for crimes He did not commit. The verdict by mob rule will be that He must die by crucifixion. He will be stripped naked and beaten beyond recognition. The innocent Son of God will be scourged by Roman authorities; a process by which strips of flesh are torn from His back (a punishment many die from). He will have a cross of wood placed on His back, and He will carry it until strength fails, and Simon Cyrene will carry His cross the rest of the distance to Golgotha.

At that point, He will be laid out upon the cross, and His hands will be stretched out and nailed in place. Finally, His feet will be nailed to the cross, a nail driven through the ankles and secured to the wood. Next, he will be lifted from the ground by a Roman guard and the cross dropped into a hole, there to land with a sickening thud. Now, He is left to die.

1. For whom Jesus is praying: (**John 17:2-3,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14, 15,16,17,18,19; John 17:20-21**).
2. For what He is not praying.
 - a. He is not praying for the unbelieving world (**John 17:9, *I am not praying for the world...***)
 - b. He is not praying that believers are taken out of the world (**John 17:15, *I do not ask that you take them out of the world...***)
 - c. He is not praying only for current believers (**John 17:20, *I do not ask for these only...***)
 - i. Jesus Christ knows every believer since their names have “*been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life*” (**Rev 13:8; cf. 3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27**).
 - ii. Jesus prays for all “*who will believe in me.*” (**John 17:20**)

I. Union with Christ: A Brief Overview

- A. The Nature of the Union of a believer with Christ.
 1. Union (uniting) with Christ is the most foundational reality of the Christian life.
 2. It is not a positional label or organizational membership but a living spiritual bond between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ.
 3. **1 Corinthians 6:17**, *But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.*
- B. The Trinitarian Roots of Union with Christ.
 1. Jesus prays that believers would be one, just as He is one with the Father (**John 17:22**, “*that they may be one even as we are one...*”)
 2. Jesus is praying for a staggering level of intimacy for believers **John 17:23**, *I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one...*
- C. The Holy Spirit is the Agent who unites the believer to Christ.
 1. **Romans 8:9–11**, *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*
 2. The Holy Spirit is the “down payment,” or “earnest” of our salvation (**Ephesians 1:14**, *Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*)
 3. Paul describes this reality (**Galatians 2:20**, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*) (See also **Romans 8:9** above).
- D. The reality of being “*in Christ*”
 1. Paul uses the phrase “*in Christ*” more than 160 times.
 2. Every spiritual blessing flows from being “*in Christ.*”
 3. We are not just forgiven, but made alive *in Christ* by union with Him.

John 17:20-23	1 Corinthians 6:17-20	1 Corinthians 3:16-17
Jesus prays for all believers to be united in the Godhead	Union with Christ is personal, involves the body, and the indwelling of the Spirit	Union with Christ is not singular but corporate; believers are the Temple of God
<i>I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just 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 have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.</i>	<i>But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 18 Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.</i>	<i>Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.</i>

II. The Source and Pattern of our Union with Christ (John 17:20-23)

- A. This is not a prayer for organized religion or surface unity, but rather spiritual unity in Christ.
- B. Union with Christ is the means of fellowship with the Godhead.
 1. **John 17:21**, *That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us,*
 2. Our union originates in the eternal union between Father and Son, and by God's Spirit believers are drawn into that fellowship. (See **1 John 1:1-7**)
- C. Union with Christ is not manufactured through spiritual disciplines; it is given and received by faith.
- D. The believer's task is to live based upon what is already true in his life!

III. The Illustration of our Union with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:17-20)

- A. Union with Christ is more than forgiveness, being declared righteous, and going to Heaven. Believers are the actual dwelling place of the living God, right now!
- B. The Temple Portrait
 1. The Tabernacle (**Exodus 40:35**)
 2. Solomon's Temple (**1 Kings 8:10-11**)
- C. The Temple is God's (**1 Corinthians 6:19**)
 1. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *"The body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Ghost. That means that what we do with our bodies matters supremely. We cannot say that the body doesn't matter. It matters tremendously because the Spirit of God dwells in it."*
 2. Peter captures this in **1 Peter 2:5** — believers are *"living stones being built up as a spiritual house."* Individual stones alone are not a temple. They must be fitted together, joined, mortared — each one distinct but inseparable from the whole structure.

IV. The Light for our path

- A. **Begin with Identity, Not Effort** - The believer does not strive *toward* union with Christ; they live *from* it. Morning prayer and Scripture are not ladders up to God but the conscious acknowledgment of a union already real.
- B. **Treat the Body as Sacred Space** – God has not called us “out of the world.” He has called us to live in unity with Him by His Spirit (**John 17:15**)
- C. **Take Church attendance seriously** – attending is never treated as optional and is the gathering of the local body (**Hebrews 10:25**)
- D. **Grieve division in the body** - Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 3:17 is severe: *"If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him."* Division, factionalism, and contempt in the body of Christ is not merely relational failure — it is **desecrating the temple of the Holy Spirit**.
- E. **Let Union Produce Mission** - Jesus says in John 17:23 that the purpose of this visible unity is *"so that the world may know that You sent Me."*