

**General Topics :: Jesus's Unanswered Prayer?****Jesus's Unanswered Prayer? - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/5/27 13:08**

This morning I was reading in John 17, the "high priestly prayer" of Jesus.

In relevant portion: "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me."

John 17:20-21

Is this prayer of Jesus unanswered? We have countless denominations as well as larger divisions (Protestant, RC, Orthodox).

Non-charismatics think charismatics are kooks and dangerous and charismatics think non-charismatics are to be pitied and are missing out on all the good stuff.

Here in the south we have black only churches and primarily white churches and everyone seems fine with the arrangement.

Some churches have separate services for Hispanics.

So is Jesus's prayer simply a prayer that God has not answered? If not, why not? Jesus only prayed the will of the Father so why does the Father not unify his church?

Was Jesus's prayer a pipe dream? After all, people are people.

Re: Jesus's Unanswered Prayer? - posted by savannah, on: 2021/5/27 15:19

Todd asks,

"Is this prayer of Jesus unanswered?"

"So is Jesus's prayer simply a prayer that God has not answered?"

"Was Jesus's prayer a pipe dream?"

The simple straightforward answer to all 3 of Todd's questions is an unequivocal "No".

But since the short and correct answer of "No" is not sufficient for the masses, here's a tad more;

I. THE UNITY DESIRE. These words of the Saviour have been mischievously perverted. Ecclesiastics have dreamed of a great confederation, presided over by a number of ministers, these again governed by superior officers, and these again by others, and these topped at last by a supreme visible head, who must be either a person or a council: and what is worse, they turned the dream into a reality, and the time was when, from the centre at the Vatican, one united body covered all Europe. And what was the result? Did the world believe that God had sent Christ? The world believed the very opposite, that God had nothing to do with that great crushing, superstitious thing; and thinking men became infidels. Yet people dream that dream still.

1. What were the elements of this unity which Christ so anxiously desired? The unity was to be composed of the people who are here called "they." Who are they?

(1) Persons specially given to Jesus by the Father (ver. 2). Not then of all men who happen to dwell in any particular district, or city, but a unity of persons who have received, not common life, as all have, but life eternal.

(2) Persons to whom God's name has been manifested (ver. 6) — chosen men, not the mass, not kingdoms.

(3) Persons who have been schooled, and have learned unusual lessons (ver. 7), and they have learned their lesson well. "They have kept Thy word." (4) Persons prayed for by Christ, in a sense in which He never prays for the world (ver. 9).

(5) People in whom God is glorified (ver. 10). The one Church of God, is it composed of the Church of England, the Congregational Union, the Wesleyan Conference, and the Baptist body? No. Is not then the Church of England a part of the Church of Christ, and the Baptist denomination a part? No; but there are believers in all denominations of Christians, ay e! and many in no visible Church at all, who are in Christ Jesus, and consequently in the great unity.

2. What is the bond which keeps these united ones together?

(1) They have the same origin. Every person who is a partaker of the life of God, has sprung from the same Divine Father.

(2) They are supported by the same strength. The life which makes vital the prayer of a believer to-day is the same life which quickened the cry of a believer two thousand years ago.

(3) They have the same aim and object. The inward spirit is forcing its way to the same perfection of holiness, and is meanwhile seeking to glorify God.

(4) Above all, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in every believer, is the true fount of oneness. I meet an Englishman anywhere the wide world over, and I recognize in him some likeness to myself; and so I meet a Christian five hundred years back in the midst of Romanism and darkness, but his speech bewrayeth him; if my soul shall traverse space in one hundred years to come, although Christianity may have assumed another outward garb and fashion, I shall still recognize the Christian. This is a very different bond from that which men try to impose upon each other. They put straps round the outside, they tie us together with many knots, and we feel uneasy; but God puts a Divine life inside of us, and then we wear the sacred bonds of love with ease.

3. There are tokens which evidence this union, and prove that the people of God are one. We hear much moaning over our divisions. There may be some that are to be deplored among ecclesiastical confederacies, but in the spiritual church I am at a loss to discover the divisions which are so loudly proclaimed. There is a union —

(1) In judgment upon all vital matters. I converse with a spiritual man, and no matter what he calls himself, when we talk of sin, pardon, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and such like themes, we are agreed.

(2) In experimental points.

(3) In heart. Where the Spirit of God is there must be love. How is it that I cannot help loving George Herbert and George Fox, who are in some things complete opposites? Because they both loved the Master.

(4) In prayer. Well-taught believers address the throne of Greece in the same style, whatever may be the particular form which their Church organization may have assumed.

(5) In praise. Our music goes up with sweet accord to the throne of grace.

(6) In action. True Christians anywhere are all doing the same work.

4. You say, "But I cannot see this unity." Why? Perhaps —

(1) Because of your want of information. I saw a large building the other day being erected, and puzzled myself to make out how that would make a complete structure; it seemed to me that the gables would come in so very awkwardly. But I dare say if I had seen a plan there might have been some central tower or some combination by which the wings, one of which appeared to be longer than the other, might have been brought into harmony, for the architect doubtless had a unity in his mind which I had not in mine. So you and I have not the necessary information as to what the Church is to be. The plan is not worked out yet. Shall the Master show you His plan? Not so; wait a while and you will find that all these diversities among spiritually-minded men, when the master-plan comes to be wrought out, are different parts of the grand whole. I go into a great factory: there is a wheel spinning away in that way perfectly careless of every other wheel; there is

another going in an opposite direction, and I say, "What an extraordinary muddle this all seems!" I do not understand the machinery. So when I go into the great visible Church of God, if I look with the eyes of my spirit I can see the inner harm only, but if with these eyes I look upon the great outward Church I cannot see it.

(2) Because of the present roughness of the material? See yonder a number of stones ' here, a number of trees; I can not see the unity. Of course not. When these trees are all cut into planks, when these stones are all squared, then you may begin to see them as a whole.

(3) Because you cannot see anything. Do not suppose that the unity of the Church is a thing that is to be seen by these eyes of ours. Never! Everything spiritual is spiritually discerned. You must get spiritual eyes before you can see it.

II. THE WORK THAT IS TO BE DONE BEFORE THIS UNITY CAN BE COMPLETE. There are many chosen ones who have not yet believed in Christ, and the Church cannot be one till these are saved. These chosen ones are to believe ' that is a work of grace, but they are to believe through our word. If you would promote the unity of Christ's Church, look after His lost sheep. If you ask what is to be your word, the answer is in the text ' it is to be concerning Christ. They are to believe in Him. Every soul that believes in Christ is built into the great gospel unity in its measure.

(C. H. Spurgeon.)

Re: Jesus's Unanswered Prayer? - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2021/5/27 22:15

This not about some ecumenical unity.

The blessedness of Christ is the reward which the Father has given Him. Jesus is able to realize His own prayer: that the essential oneness and blessedness of the divine nature should be realized in those who believe.

The Father could not give, nor the Savior ask, for a greater reward than this.

In Christ,

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2021/5/28 4:13

To Ron's point, Ssvannah's point, and to Todd's question:

Ephesians 4:11-13

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Unity is found in the mature, at the point of the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Through truly knowing Jesus over time, we are transformed into His likeness and thus maturity and unity are attained. More like Jesus, more unity.

This prayer of Jesus is being answered because we know that all who are born again are being transformed by the Spirit through various means but converge at the revelation of the knowledge of Jesus to the heart of the faithful born again.

As an aside, I think this is a good theological argument for why the apostolic ministry has not ceased. Through these gifts, the church is built up into such knowledge, such maturity and such unity. They are part of the means (gifts to the church) that Jesus uses and the Holy Spirit employs to build up the church to unity and maturity. That need and that process aren't over. Just something to consider. Not meant to be conclusive of anything.

Re: - posted by Lordoitagain (), on: 2021/5/29 1:15

I LOVE many of the answers on this thread, and especially the last one by Robert! This is SO true: "Unity is found in the mature, at the point of the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." It has been the reality in my own walk with Christ. I came to know The Lord as a child in a church that was led by a ministry that actually continuously worked against Our Lord's prayer in John 17. Unity was only under the ideology of our pastor. Most others who did not share his ideology on every point were considered enemies. Eventually as I matured in a true relationship with Christ, he (and at that time almost the entire church) considered me an enemy because I dared to ask questions about leadership issues. I had been in that church all my life and I was 35 when I started going to another church. That church was similar in many ways. Eventually I had to part ways with it as well.

I came to realize that Christ is the fountain, NOT THE CHURCH CONGREGATION OR DENOMINATIONAL GROUP! In almost all churches there are people, (regardless of the particular ideological slant of the ministry) who have TRULY found The Fountain. Within every theological ideology there is room for self justification; therefore, in almost every church there are also people who appear to know Christ but really don't. As people who have truly found Christ grow in their relationship with Him, there are sometimes moments when they are "disfellowshipped" by church leaders, but even others in their churches who are more mature in Christ (than their own leaders) continue to fellowship their brothers.

Division amongst TRUE followers of Christ is only because of lack of maturity. Division in what is called "Christianity" is because of the many who are within the group who aren't truly following Christ. Things like massive persecution often bring rapid maturity (resulting in more unity) to some believers and divides out those who do not truly know Christ.

I must clarify something that Todd wrote about:

"Here in the south we have black only churches and primarily white churches and everyone seems fine with the arrangement.

Some churches have separate services for Hispanics."

I am in Louisiana (about as south as it gets). More and more churches are getting more racially mixed here as people are maturing in Christ. Unbiblical societal constructs have affected immature Christians for many years. When I was growing up the black church and our white church would have district meetings together, and even though there was a lot of love shared between the groups, the societal constructs hindered our closeness. That being said, there is another issue involved. Sometimes two cultures are SO different that it is not as practical to work together in the same weekly schedule having services together. Personally I LOVE the way black people worship, and could fit right in with an all black church and love it! Many of them would likely get bored in services run primarily by white people all the time. Even if you had a mixture in leadership, the different cultural groups might be patiently enduring those parts of the service that don't relate to them as well.

I pastor a Hispanic mission. Before I started in Hispanic ministry I was in a mostly white church and I would translate for Hispanics. Todd, I don't know if you speak any other languages, but personally I am a very good translator (by the grace of God), but the very best of translated ministry is NOT NEARLY as effective as direct ministry in a language. Songs are impossible to translate "on the spot" and fit in the rhythm. Often idiomatic phrases would have to have a serious "stop and explain" in order for the phrase to REALLY be understood with its impactful meaning.

Jesus taught us to be fishers of men. In order to be more effective fishermen and teachers of His Word and His ways, we often have to "divide" into cultural and linguistic groups to get the work done better. Within the Hispanics that are in the USA, there are often HUGE cultural differences because of the many different places that they come from being SO different from each other. Here in the USA, often Hispanic congregations are made up of one main cultural group. Some of the cultural differences are nationalistic. Some are even deeper and have to do with the particular native American tribe that they are from within their country. In missionary work it is necessary AT FIRST for a person from one culture to carry the message to another culture, but once disciples are matured in that culture, they are ALWAYS much more effective in transmitting the gospel to their own culture than the original person who brought it to them!

I don't see the "bikers for Christ", "truckers for Christ", "cowboys for Christ" groups and entire churches here in the USA as going against The Lord's prayer in John 17, but as fulfilling His commission.

The apostle Paul well understood these concepts:

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1Co 9:19[^] For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.[^]
1Co 9:20[^] And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;[^]
1Co 9:21[^] To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.[^]
1Co 9:22[^] To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.[^]
1Co 9:23[^] And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.[^]

Again, where there is fervent mature love for Christ, there is fervent unity, even across denominational, racial, cultural and linguistic lines!!!

Col 3:10[^] And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:[^]
Col 3:11[^] Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.[^]

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2021/5/29 8:25

Another support for the idea that the source of unity is in spiritual maturity is found when Paul addresses the Corinthian church and corrects them for their divisions. He tells them their divisions are tied to their living in the flesh as natural men and acting as babies, merely human. He attributes their lack of unity to the fact that they are not "spiritual", not mature, not living and walking in the Spirit. Today, we see divisions and disunity because many walk as men of the flesh, using human wisdom, human strength, mere human love, and limited human talents. Disunity is only one of the problems that living as mere humans creates. BTW, "emere humans" is the term Paul uses. The Spirit gives life and unity, the flesh is of no help at all. In fact it inhibits.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/5/29 11:19

I also appreciate all the responses.

If you take a look around it would seem the world is more united against the Church than the Church is against the world. Maybe the "spiritually mature" Christians simply can't find each other.

If each congregation only has a handful of spiritually mature believers that CAN be in unity per Robert's posts, I am not sure how the church in Acts can be recreated, if that was intended to be a model of sorts.

Re: - posted by CofG (), on: 2021/5/29 13:25

Hi Todd,

Acts 1 is the answer. We often think or are taught that the filling of the Spirit in believers in Acts 1 only resulted in tongues and bold preaching, but, the fact is that immediately following the filling, the believers were devoted to the teachings of Jesus, devoted to each other (in sacrificial brotherly love), devoted to gathering together and devoted to prayer (Acts 2:42) A fullness of the Spirit is the key. Mature believers are more regularly and more fully filled. Fellowship through fullness of the Spirit is another way to describe unity. The Spirit strengthens us so that we can be filled with all the fullness of God and He thereby gets glory in the Church.

1 John 1 says that we have fellowship with one another and with the Father and the Son (unity) when we walk in the light, and we most walk in the light when we are devoted to Jesus and devoted in love to one another according to 1 John 2. When the Spirit fills us with power and with the love and divine nature of God, we are all one with Him and each other and brotherly love and all the blessings of God shower us and flow out of us.

We need more men and women more regularly filled with faith and the Holy Spirit. Unity and a whole host of other blessings flow in the body of Christ that way.

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Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/5/29 14:18

Amen to that!

Re: - posted by Lordoitagain (), on: 2021/5/31 0:37

One of the reasons that there was so much maturity and unity in the church in Acts is that they had just had 3+ years of intense training from The Master. As The Gospel reaches uncharted territory it has to be patiently taught as Jesus told us to make disciples in all the world and "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you".

Another thing that brought about that kind of maturity and unity was united prayer and intercession. As the church returns to intercession sessions before the Holy of Holies, there will be more maturity and more real genuine love and unity.

I am so thankful that God put me in Hispanic ministry. Most of them come from horrific situations and realize the need to cry out to God as our only hope. You will never have a packed house at any prayer meeting, but with the Hispanics, at least you have a few who really pour their hearts out to God in desperate intercession before God.

Re: Jesus's Unanswered Prayer? - posted by Sree (), on: 2021/6/2 10:46

Last week when I saw the thread's title I know what would be the question. When I came to Christ reading the Bible, this same question came to my mind as well.

This is what I believe is the answer, Jesus prayer is always answered but it is true only for real disciples of Jesus. I do not believe that everyone is a disciple. True disciples will always be united. Unity is primarily inside a local body of Christ. Even in a local Church only true disciples in that church will be united, rest will bite each other or accuse each other.

In the context of denominations, I believe all denominations started with right motives but they have gone astray as their godly leaders departed.

Also division does not mean lack of unity. Even in first Century, Paul and Barnabas could not work together after a division, does that mean they were not united in spirit? Paul and Peter could not work together when Paul opposed Peter in Galatian Church. Does that mean they lack unity?

I find the same with believers from denominational churches, I cannot work with them but I can still be united with them in spirit.