

Jesus Prays for Unity (John 17:9-17:26)

Expository Lessons from the Gospel of John

I. Background for the Farewell Discourse

- a. As we resume in the text, it is the Thursday night, the night before Jesus is to be crucified.
 - i. Jesus has had his Last Supper with the disciples, at which (we know from **Matthew**, **Mark** and **Luke**) He instituted the Lord's Supper with the bread and the cup.
- b. After dinner has ended and Judas has departed, but before Jesus and his disciples cross over to the Garden of Gethsemane (where Jesus will be taken prisoner), Jesus gives a lengthy and very significant talk to the apostles.
 - i. The passages we will cover in this lesson are part of that "Farewell Discourse", which we find in **John 13:31-17:26**.
 - ii. Jesus discusses several topics multiple times within this discourse. For the purposes of teaching this series, we have taken the subjects within this discourse topically, as they first appear (Holy Spirit, Jesus' impending departure, the faith that would be handed down complete, the importance of obeying Jesus' teachings, etc.) Since we are approaching the last part of this discourse, many of the things He discusses in the text (in **John 16**) are things we covered in prior lessons.
 - 1. Therefore, we will read and briefly review those things, but focus in this lesson on new things we did not previously cover.
- c. In our last lesson we discussed Jesus speaking of His departure and return. Also, he began a prayer to His Father in **John 17:1** that we will continue to follow in this lesson, marking the end of this discourse, before He and His disciples proceed to the Garden of Gethsemane.

II. Jesus Continues Praying for the Apostles (Read **John 17:9-19**)

- a. Jesus says He is departing the world, but they will be left in the world.
- b. Jesus recounts that He had kept all those the Father gave Him, except "the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled".
 - i. This comment obviously refers to Judas, who betrayed Jesus.

ii. **Question:** What Scripture from the Old Testament was fulfilled by Judas betraying Jesus?

1. Recall what Jesus had said when washing the disciples' feet:
 - a. "Jesus said to him, 'He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.' For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, 'You are not all clean.'" (**John 13:10-11**, NKJV)
 - b. "I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.'" (**John 13:18**, NKJV)
2. Here Jesus is quoting from **Psalms 41:9** (designated **Psalms 40:10** in the LXX). Read **Psalms 41:7-13** (designated **Psalms 40:8-14** in the LXX)
 - a. This psalm written by king David, a direct ancestor of Jesus.
 - b. Enemies conspiring against him. They ask, "Since he is asleep, will he rise again?"
 - i. Sleep often a metaphor for death in the Scriptures (for example, in **Daniel 12:2**, **John 11:11-13** and several places in **1 Corinthians 15**).
 - ii. He asks the Lord to "raise him up" so that he can repay his enemies.
 - iii. The same Greek word ἀνίστημι (anistemi) used here in the LXX has multiple meanings, similar to English term "raise up", including "resurrected from the dead"
 - iv. He is *treated deceptively* by a close friend (literally one who "*lifted his heel*"), one who shared in eating his bread.
 - v. The Lord supports him because of his innocence; he is established before the Lord forever.

- c. All the elements of this psalm foreshadow the betrayal (by Judas, a trusted friend), the death and the resurrection of Jesus.
- 3. Peter, in **Acts 1:15-22**, also quotes from **Psalm 69** and **Psalm 109** referring to Judas.
 - a. Read **Psalm 109:1-20** (in the LXX designated **Psalm 108:1-20**)
 - i. "So they repaid me evil for good. And hatred for my love."
 - ii. "Let the devil stand at his right hand", equivalent to Judas being referred to as the "son of perdition".
 - iii. "Let his days be very few, and may a different man receive his office". Note that Judas died young, by suicide, and was replaced as apostle by Matthias in **Acts 1:23-26**.
 - iv. "Because he did not remember to show mercy, But persecuted a poor and needy man..."
 - v. "And I became an object of reproach to them; They saw me; they shook their heads."
 - vi. "I will give thanks to the Lord abundantly with my mouth... Because He stood at the right hand of a poor man, To save me from those who persecute my soul."
 - c. Jesus prays that while his apostles remain in the world, that the Father will protect them from "the evil one", Satan.
 - i. If you face struggles, adversity and temptations in life, remember that we have a powerful enemy who seeks to destroy us. Recall the story in **Job**, of what Satan did to try to drive Job away from God.
 - ii. Peter concludes his first letter with a reminder to all Christians:
 - 1. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (**1 Peter 5:8**, NKJV)
 - iii. Jesus told us to pray daily, to be delivered from Satan (just as He prayed similarly for his apostles).

1. "And do not lead us into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (**Matthew 6:13**, NKJV)
2. If we are God's sheep, abiding in Him by obeying His commands, His sheep "will every perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My Father's hand." (**John 10:29**)
- d. Jesus asks that his apostles be "sanctified (= *made holy*) by the truth"; and He says to the Father, "Your word is truth".

III. Jesus Prays for All Believers – For Unity (Read **John 17:20-26**)

- a. This is the close of His prayer, and the close of His Farewell Discourse, before He and the disciples depart for the Garden of Gethsemane.
- b. Summary of the things Jesus is praying for.
 - i. He is praying now not just for the disciples who were with Him at the time, but for all who will believe in Him through their word. That includes us. So here Jesus is praying for us!
 - ii. Jesus prays that we may be unified.
 1. He prays that we may be one just as He and the Father are one (a *unified* one, not a singular one).
 2. This unity will be a sign to the world:
 - a. that Jesus was sent by His Father; and
 - b. that the Father loves Jesus' followers just as He loved Jesus.
 3. Jesus prays that His followers may be where He is.
 - a. I assume here Jesus is praying for His followers ultimately to be in heaven with Him and the Father.
 - iii. Jesus prays that God's love will be in Jesus' disciples, and that He will be in them (**John 17:26**).
 - iv. It seems to me that much of this close of His prayer is focused on an aspect of what He said earlier: His command that they love one another as Jesus loved them.
- c. Satan will want to fracture Jesus' church.
 - i. We are in the midst of a spiritual battle against Satan and his forces of evil.

- ii. Jesus is concerned about what his enemy, the devil, will do to His followers after He departs.
 - 1. Satan will try to undo as much as possible of what Jesus accomplished.
 - 2. Satan will try to discredit Jesus, His message and the followers He left behind.
 - 3. Not only will Satan attack from the outside (with persecution, temptations from the world), but also *from within the church* (promoting strife, discord, sectarianism and disunity).
 - a. In the parable of the wheat and tares (**Matthew 13:24-43**), the enemy sows tares among the wheat, *after the farmer has planted the wheat*. The tares are not to be pulled out until the harvest time.
 - b. Similarly, the kingdom of God is likened to a dragnet (a fishing net dragged behind a boat) that captures both good and bad fish, which are separated out by the angels at the end (**Matthew 13:47-50**).
- iii. Division has been a challenge to the church, from the beginning.
 - 1. Read **1 Corinthians 1:10-13**. Note that of all the problems facing the Corinthian church (sexual immorality, lawsuits, Lord's supper, role of men and women, spiritual gifts, false teaching about resurrection of the body, etc.), Paul *hits divisions first*.
 - 2. Unfortunately, in this area things have gotten *even worse* in the church since Paul's day.
- iv. Causing division in the church is a very serious sin, one that will keep people out of the kingdom of God.
 - 1. "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (**Galatians 5:19-21**, NASB95)
 - 2. Here Paul includes several things most conservative Christians would see as extremely serious sins of the flesh, such as: immorality, idolatry, sorcery, and drunkenness.

3. However, among those serious sins notice that Paul also, includes *other, equally serious sins of the flesh: enmities, strife, dissention, disputes and factions!*
- v. Some significant concerns jump to my immediate attention.
1. The Christian world overall is horribly fractured into thousands of groups (sects, denominations, cults, etc.). We see the evidence of Satan's success over time.
 - a. In fact, Satan has made a complete joke of the Christian church to the world. Christians *can't even get along with each other*. In the eyes of the world, this effectively discredits Jesus' teaching on love and unity.
 2. Satan has made gains in many other areas against the church, including: remarriage after divorce, war, lawsuits, immorality, radical feminism, homosexuality, immodesty and worldliness. However, at least we can find some "radical Christian" types striving to remain faithful to Jesus' teachings in those areas.
 - a. Nevertheless, even among groups which are adamant about restoring many of Jesus' teachings, I see almost no similar conviction regarding Christian unity, factions and sectarianism.
 - b. In fact, those groups are often *among the worst* offenders in promoting factions and a sectarian spirit!
- vi. Many attempts at Christian unity have been built on the wrong foundations. Examples:
1. Some promote a "Broad-road Christianity" approach to unity (a typical Protestant ecumenical approach).
 - a. Their strategy: *Just believe in Jesus*; don't worry about controversial specific teachings.
 - b. The problem: Ignoring the hard teachings of Jesus *is no basis for the unity which Jesus spoke about!*
 2. Some promote a politically unified structure, with all Christians ultimately under one person who is the leader (the Roman Catholic approach, with unity under the pope).
 - a. This strategy: Seek a worldly, political type of unity as we would find under an earthly king.

- b. With this approach, members don't need to think or to know the teachings of Jesus; just follow the leader!
- c. Problems with this approach:
 - i. The faith can be altered or can drift over time, since unity is based on apostolic lineage rather than on the *apostolic faith*.
 - ii. This produces spiritual laziness (not important for everyone to read their Bibles).
- 3. Some attempt to effectively eliminate the problem by re-defining "Christians" as *applying only to their denomination*. Those who fall for this approach see no need to be unified with all other Christians, *since there aren't any other Christians outside of their group!*
 - a. To make this exclusive claim (of being the only true Christians on earth) a group will strive to have a particular doctrine or combination of doctrines (or charismatic leader) *that no one else has* in quite the same way. Then, the group must over-emphasize the importance of that distinctiveness (differences between their group and all others).
 - b. This approach invariably results in hyper-emphasis or specialization on a few teachings (while ignoring others).
 - c. This approach appeals to the purists and elitists, who tend to look down on everyone else. They keep their heads in the sand, not acknowledging the presence of other Christians who are not in their group.
 - d. Group that embrace this view can then appoint a committee to decide all matters and make up all their own rules. Then they push out those who do not conform to what the group's leadership says (again, they do not have to deal with "other Christians" outside their group).
 - e. This approach leads in the direction of creating a cult (people who believe they are the only true Christians in the world).
- 4. Some attempt to seek unity by redefining Christian unity as *uniformity*.

- a. From that perspective, unity can only be achieved *if everyone believes exactly same the same things*. They can promote this kind of “unity” by insisting that all follow the same man-made rules (such as what you wear, what you can or cannot do, etc.) or else they must leave the group.
 - b. Their leadership structure often strongly emphasizes the passage, “obey your leaders and submit to them” from **Hebrews 13:17**.
 - c. Every time someone thinks differently, must either do a self-performed mental lobotomy (stop thinking or questioning anything) or else leave that group and find or start another. The results: brittle fellowship, frequent division, no ability for all Christians to become unified.
- d. An attempt at restoring Christian unity: the (Stone/Campbell) Restoration Movement.
 - i. Most people are *not even trying* to restore the Christian unity that Jesus taught about; they think that *this is impossible!* However, Jesus prayed for this unity for us (so it *must be* possible).
 - 1. There are both outstanding and bad examples from history for us to learn from.
 - ii. Early 1800’s, Restoration Movement (Stone-Campbell) strove to restore Christian unity and dissolve denominational, sectarian barriers.
 - 1. Famous document signed in 1804 by Barton Stone and other ministers, *Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery*. Some background:
 - a. “The Springfield Presbytery” was a group of about 15 congregations in Kentucky that banded together as a group. They had been under the Kentucky Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.
 - b. These 15 churches were having success; they were growing, and people were excited.
 - c. However, the leaders realized that *people were getting their identity primarily from the group* (rather from Christ). Also, they answered to the synod (rather than directly to Scriptures). They were starting to embrace

extra-Biblical rules and teachings (rather than holding solely to the commands in Scripture).

- d. Recognizing these problems, the leaders then did something quite unexpected: decided to put their beloved presbytery to death!
2. The tone of the document combines irony, biting sarcasm, a deep desire for spiritual freedom and unity, and great idealism. This document was truly the “Last Will and Testament” of their sect.
3. (Read from *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, which is included in the appendix to these notes.)
 - a. Key points include:
 - i. Do not get your identify from your church group; rather, go to “the Rock of ages”.
 - ii. We should have nothing to do with sectarianism (dividing the church into fractured groups).
 - iii. We are to simply “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.”
 - iv. Let’s simply be Christians: nothing more, nothing less.
- iii. Late 1800’s, David Lipscomb nailed the division issue.
 1. (Read a selection from David Lipscomb’s, *On Christian Unity*, chapter 1, which is included in the appendix to these notes.)
 2. David Lipscomb uses vivid imagery of what Christians who promote factions and division within the body of Christ are doing; they are dismembering Christ’s own body, essentially hacking His body into pieces!
 - a. Lipscomb’s account reminds me of the story of Jamal Khashoggi, Saudi dissident and writer for the Washington Post.
 - i. According to journalist reports from the Mideast, on October 2, 2018 Khashoggi was lured into the Saudi embassy in Turkey, then killed over a gruesome seven-minute period. His body was dismembered with a bone saw.

- ii. Some reports from the Mideast claim Khashoggi was dismembered while still alive; others that he was killed first, and *then* his body was dismembered. To date, his body has not been recovered.
 - iii. The man responsible for dismembering his body wore headphones and listened to music while he performed this gruesome task. (He said he prefers to *do his work to music!*)
 - iv. Imagine: This corresponds to *what we are doing to the body of Christ* when we promote factions, division and sectarianism among believers!
- b. Lipscomb established the critical importance of Christian unity, based on what Jesus and the apostles taught; and then addressed the division that followed in the body of Christ early in the church's history.
- c. Lipscomb then recounted the *attempt at unity* mounted by early leaders of the Restoration Movement in the early 1800's: promoting a spirit of love and harmony. Also, that effort was marked by a return to following the Bible alone (adding no other rules nor creeds). One of their hallmarks: "Speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent."
- iv. The Restoration Movement attempt at unity was faltering in Lipscomb's day, and *ultimately it failed*.
 - 1. The Churches of Christ (a conservative group to come out of Restoration Movement, one that many of us are personally familiar with) ultimately turned their focus away from simple Christian unity. Instead, they tended to focus largely on creating *the perfect church* (in terms of doctrines, forms of worship and organization, and practices).
 - 2. The movement unfortunately ended up becoming very divided and sectarian, splitting over relatively minor issues (that the Scriptures said nothing about) such as: instrumental music, missions societies, one cup versus multiple in communion, etc.
 - 3. They also became hyper-focused on a few distinctive doctrines. Over time, they lost emphasis on some foundational kingdom teachings, such as nonresistance and separation from the world.

- e. The challenge for us today: to embrace Jesus' call for unity *once again*.
 - i. Unity with other groups is *hard work*! It's *much easier* to avoid working at that!
 - ii. The only unity that will work (in the end) is one based on *following all the teachings* of Jesus and the apostles; and *adding nothing more*. Either *removing from* or *adding to* what we have in the New Testament creates disunity in the body of Christ.
 - iii. We must have a charitable, loving, harmonious spirit. Paul points to this kind of unity in his letter to the **Ephesians**.
 - 1. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism;" (**Ephesians 4:1–5**, NKJV)
 - 2. Emphasis must be on the simple Christian faith (outlined in the Apostles Creed).
 - iv. We can't identify with a group or a name. No building our own monument, our own religious "tower of Babel"; something becomes a *monument to ourselves*.
 - v. Striving for unity will bring many blessings. Almost all groups have something to offer, something of the original faith that they have held on to. Getting to know different groups will help us to see ourselves more clearly, and the gaps in our own group's understanding of and obedience to the Scriptures.
 - vi. Unity is hard work. Takes time, energy, love, humility. Build bridges, learn, spread the kingdom teachings in all directions.
 - vii. Unity is not an option! We must be as serious about this as about all other teachings of Jesus.
 - viii. We can be uncompromising on essential truths of the faith without forsaking Christian unity.
 - ix. **Challenge:** What are you going to do this week and this year to promote the kind of unity among all believers that Jesus called for?
- f. Closing thoughts, to inspire us to work for Christian unity.

- i. (Read from Richard McNemar's *Observations on Church Government*, chapter 3; by the Presbytery of Springfield. This is included in the appendix to these notes.)
 1. Background: this document was first published in 1807, as a follow-on document to the Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery.
 2. (Note: in the audio, I incorrectly attributed this to Barton Stone, who may have been involved in writing this. However, McNemar, who was another signer of the Last Will and Testament, is listed as the principal author of this document.)

IV. Appendix (Quotes Used in this Lesson)

- a. *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* (published 1804), by Barton Stone and others
- b. David Lipscomb, *On Christian Unity*, excerpt from chapter 1
- c. Richard McNemar, *Observations on Church Government* (first published in 1807 to accompany *Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*), excerpt from chapter 3

LAST WILL AND TESTAMNENT OF THE SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERY

THE PRESBYTERY OF SPRINGFIELD sitting at Caneridge, in the county of Bourbon, being, through a gracious Providence, in more than ordinary bodily health, growing in strength and size daily; and in perfect soundness and composure of mind; but knowing that it is appointed for all delegated bodies once to die; and considering that the life of every such body is very uncertain, do make and ordain this our last Will and Testament, in manner and form following, viz.:

Imprimis. We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.

Item. We will that our name of distinction, with its *Reverend* title, be forgotten, that there be but one Lord over God's heritage, and his name one.

Item. We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*.

Item. We will, that candidates for the Gospel ministry henceforth study the Holy Scriptures with fervent prayer, and obtain license from God to preach the simple Gospel, with *the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*, without any mixture of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men, or the rudiments of the world. And let none henceforth take *this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*.

Item. We will, that the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government,—try her candidates for the ministry, as to their soundness in the faith, acquaintance with experimental religion, gravity and aptness to teach; and admit no other proof of their authority but Christ speaking in them. We will, that the church of Christ look up to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest; and that she resume her primitive right of trying those *who say they are apostles, and are not*.

Item. We will, that each particular church, as a body, actuated by the same spirit, choose her own preacher, and support him by a free-will offering, without a written *call* or *subscription*—admit members—remove offenses; and never henceforth *delegate* her right of government to any man or set of men whatever.

Item. We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell.

Item. We will, that preachers and people cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less; and while they behold the signs of the times, look up, and confidently expect that redemption draweth nigh.

Item. We will, that our weak brethren, who may have been wishing to make the Presbytery of Springfield their king, and wot not what is now become of it, betake themselves to the Rock of Ages, and follow Jesus for the future.

Item. We will, the Synod of Kentucky examine every member who may be suspected of having departed from the Confession of Faith, and suspend every such suspected heretic immediately, in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of Gospel liberty.

Item. We will, that Ja-----, the author of two letters lately published in Lexington, be encouraged in his zeal to destroy *partyism*. *We will*, moreover, that our past conduct be examined into by all who may have correct information; but let foreigners beware of speaking evil of things which they know not.

Item. Finally we will, that all our *sister bodies* read their Bibles carefully, that they may see their fate there determined, and prepare for death before it is too late.

Witnesses:

ROBERT MARSHALL,
JOHN DUNLAVY,
RICHARD M'NEMAR,
B. W. STONE,
JOHN THOMPSON,
DAVID PURVIANCE.

*Springfield Presbytery,
June 28th, 1804*

ON CHRISTIAN UNITY, David Lipscomb

(Chapter 1 – Evils of Division. How Brought About)

"The great curse of the church of Jesus Christ is division. Christ foresaw that strifes and divisions would be the weakness of the church and the curse of the world. The church of Christ is the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Whatever weakens its power and destroys its influence injures the world and ruins man. Jesus Christ foreseeing this, in the prayer in which he poured out his soul to God, besought earnestly that his disciples "might be one," that all who believe on him through the words of his apostles "may be one, even as I and my Father, are one." He prayed they might be one, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." It is clear that without that oneness among his children, the world could never believe that he was sent by the Father, that is, that he was the Christ the Son of God. Without this belief that leads to the acceptance of him, as Lord and Savior, and the obedience to God, through him, no man can see God in peace.

The apostles in their teachings, everywhere and at all times, condemned and warned against division and strife within the churches as the cause of weakness and inefficiency, of corruption and defilement - that unfitted them for temples of the Holy Spirit, that disabled them from saving their own members and from proving a savor of life to the world. Christ warned, "a house divided against itself cannot stand." (Mark 3:25) Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1 Cor. 1:10) He asks, "Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. 1:13) The church is the body - the spiritual body of Christ, and if Christ is not divided against himself, the members of his body cannot be. When his people divide and strive, they divide the body of Christ, himself; they rend his spiritual body, and sever its members from each other, and serve his spiritual [body], worse than his murderers did his fleshly body. His enemies pierced that body, but his children sunder the spiritual body in twain and sever it, member from member, part from part, and leave it torn and lifeless without power to save itself or others.

In every letter written by the apostles the sin of division is condemned - the danger is signaled, and Christians forewarned against it as the sure premonition of death. The Master and the apostles not only warn against a danger so threatening, and so fatal and fearful in its results, but they give directions how to avoid division, and the way to promote and maintain unity. The Savior prayed, that his disciples might be one, and he gave clear directions as to how they should remain one.

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee." – "I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. Neither pray I for these alone but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (John 17:8-20)

The apostles also admonished them to speak the same thing, and the oneness of the word, which guides and directs all, secures the unity of the body, growing out of and guided by the word of the living God.

Notwithstanding the prayer and warning of the Savior, the entreaties and expostulations of the apostles, and the specific directions of Jesus and the Holy Spirit to maintain unity, the professed followers of Christ have been divided into striving parties from the beginning, often resulting in war and bloodshed. Many efforts, through the centuries, have been made at union, which have proved abortive.

About the beginning of the present century, an effort was made to find ground on which all sincere worshipers of God could stand in unity, and work together in harmony and love, for the honor of God and the salvation of man. The ground or fundamental basis of union was that all should lay aside all theories and practices based on human authority and standing in the wisdom of men, and in all religious service take the word of God as the only guide, and do only the things required in the teachings of Christ and the apostles. It was expressed in the adage, "Where the Bible speaks we will speak; where the Bible is silent we will be silent." If they were not to speak in matters of religion without Biblical authority, much less could they act without Scriptural direction.

This meant, no one could teach or practice anything in religion not clearly taught in the Bible. All would do what the Bible required, and would ask of no one to do or submit to what it did not require. This bound all to the word of God - to what was commanded by the Lord. It bound them to do all that was taught and to reject everything in religion, not taught in the word of God. This would bring unity through the word of God, as the Savior taught it must come..."

OBSERVATIONS ON CHURCH GOVERNMENT, Richard McNemar ed.

(First published in 1807 to accompany Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery; excerpt below is from chapter 3)

“But seeing Christians are one and have fellowship with the Father and the Son by one spirit, it is the most unreasonable thing in the world for them to be separated in their external communion. This separation has been the work of the devil, and it is by his means that it is continued in the world.

Let Christians look back to the history of primitive Christianity, as recorded in the New-Testament. Let them take a view of the plain and native simplicity which shines out there--the beautiful equality that reigned among the apostolic churches--and let them pant to breathe that native air.

They were all brethren and sisters--met together with one accord--united in one mind and one judgment. They ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart--they went from house to house, from one love-feast to another--were strictly forbidden to call themselves by the name of Paul or Apollos, &c. And such as did, were pronounced carnal, sensual, having not the spirit.

View the churches scattered abroad, planted and visited by the Apostles and others: They had all access to each other, and communion together. And that one spirit of God which lives in every Christian, has made no provision for acting otherwise, till the end of time...”