

**I Am First Baptist Church:  
I Will Be a Unifying Church Member  
John 13:34-35, John 17:20-26, Philippians 4:1-3**

**Dr. Steve Horn**

**October 20, 2013**

**Introduction:** Last week we began looking at this issue of the attitudes that should accompany being a member of a church—or for us, specifically, First Baptist Church. By the time that we are done, we will have considered 6 specific commitments of being a member of First Baptist Church. We are calling, then, this series, “I Am First Baptist Church.”

Last week, we dealt with the idea of being a “functioning church member.” The idea is that as a church member, we must function within the body of Christ, using our spiritual gift. Today, we consider the issue of being a unifying church member. It’s good to be able to address this subject to a church that is unified. We are thankful for that, but let’s use this message today to remind ourselves of the importance of unity and to make sure that we never let our guard down and to excel in the area of unity.

I was reminded this week of a classic silly historical question that fits so perfectly to the point of this issue of unity among brothers and sisters in Christ. The question was, “How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” or as some have posed the question, “The point of a pin?” The origin of the debate is said by some to go all the way back to the Middle Ages. That scholars actually really debated the issue is really in question, but rather this question kind of serves as an example of the relentless questions that some Medieval scholars did raise in reference to angels. The question about angels on the head of a pin has become an analogy of the kind of unimportant questions that sometimes bog Christians down.

I read that some years ago a poster made the rounds depicting two people kneeling over an object on the ground. Closer examination revealed that they were looking at a needle no doubt counting the number of angels on the pin.

Sounds silly, doesn’t it? However, unfortunately, these kinds of things happen often in the life of a church. Jesus was concerned with this issue of unity. In fact, so concerned, that it becomes a major object of teaching and prayer right before His last days before His Crucifixion. We are going to begin there, but add an illustration from a little later in the early history of the Church. After we get all three texts before us, we will make a couple of points of application.

**A Command—John 13:34-35**

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another.  
<sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We want to just spend a brief moment with each of these texts this morning. Notice, here...

- A New Commandment—I think Jesus meant this in terms of the Greatest Commandment to love the LORD God with all their heart, soul, and strength. Jesus was saying that equal to the love of God should be love for others.

- Our love for others is modeled and measured by the love of Jesus. You might say that you have great love for others, but we always have room to grow in this area because the measure is Jesus' perfect love.
- Our love for one another will be one of the ways that people know our relationship with Jesus. Our love for others goes hand in hand with our love for Jesus.

### **A Prayer—John 17:20-26**

I pray not only for these,  
but also for those who believe in Me  
through their message.

<sup>21</sup> May they all be one,  
as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You.

May they also be one in Us,  
so the world may believe You sent Me.

<sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory You have given Me.

May they be one as We are one.

<sup>23</sup> I am in them and You are in Me.

May they be made completely one,  
so the world may know You have sent Me  
and have loved them as You have loved Me.

<sup>24</sup> Father,

I desire those You have given Me  
to be with Me where I am.

Then they will see My glory,  
which You have given Me  
because You loved Me before the world's foundation.

<sup>25</sup> Righteous Father!

The world has not known You.  
However, I have known You,  
and these have known that You sent Me.

<sup>26</sup> I made Your name known to them  
and will make it known,  
so the love You have loved Me with  
may be in them and I may be in them.

Then, we see Jesus' prayer. Here at the end of His earthly existence, He prays. He prays first for Himself, but then He prays for us. Notice in this prayer...

- The model for our unity is the unity of the Father and the Son.
- The priority for our unity is making Jesus' message known.

At the priority of His prayer life is the unity of those who would believe in Him. And the reason for this unity is that this is how the world will know Him. Again, there is an inseparable link to the unity of the church and the witness of the church.

Before Andrew Jackson became the seventh president, he served as a major general for the Tennessee militia group. The group fought in the War of 1812. At a particularly bad time, his troops began to fight

and bicker with one another. That happens, you know. When we are busy or discouraged, we turn on one another. Patience runs thin. Reportedly, Andrew Jackson, Old Hickory, as he was called, got the troops together and said, "Gentlemen, let's remember, the enemy is over there!" (Taken from *A Legacy of Promises for a Godly Man*, attributed to Chuck Swindoll in his book, *Hope Again*.)

I think that's a good word for the church. We are not the enemy. Satan is the enemy. We must be united against that enemy. We must love one another, care for one another, be patient with one another, accept one another, believe the best about one another, and pray for one another.

Consider with me one last passage. It's a real life example of how this plays itself out in the life of a church.

### **A Real Life Example—Philippians 4:1-3**

So then, my brothers, you are dearly loved and longed for—my joy and crown. In this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. <sup>2</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the book of life.

Notice here...

- A Real Dispute
- Both of these are Christians
- Both are called on to sort the matter out meaning that both were equally in the wrong
- Admonished to "agree in the LORD"
- Another is asked to help mediate the matter

We don't know who they are or what their squabble is, but that is not important. The important thing is that they make it right.

### **2 Principles in Realizing the Importance of Unity in the Church:**

**@ the Heart of unity is our love for the Lord.**

**@ the Heart of unity is our love for the Lost.**

### **So What?**

**Does the dispute harm your representation of Christ?**

**Does the dispute harm your presentation of Christ?**

Remember that poster I told you about at the beginning with the two people stooped over a pin. In the background of that poster there were depicted men and women inching their way toward a cliff that had fire coming up from the cliff. The artist proved the point well. Here the church is arguing about stuff that really doesn't matter while men and women move ever closer to Hell. Church, may it never be here!