

Improved
Uniform
International
SUNDAY
SCHOOL
LESSON

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D.
Of The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.
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Lesson for November 25

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CHRISTIANS WORKING TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY

LESSON TEXT: John 17:20-23; Acts 15:22-29.

GOLDEN TEXT: We are laborers together with God.—I Corinthians 3:9.

Unity within the Church is God's plan and purpose, but that does not mean that some man-made plans for unity are either scriptural or desirable. There is much pressure being exerted now to unite the Church on the basis of a vast ecclesiastical organization, quite apart from any doctrinal or spiritual unity.

Such unity was not in our Lord's mind. He wants spiritual unity, and in such fellowship the Church will find its only real bond of united life and action.

1. Unity in Spirit (John 17:20-23). Here we enter the veritable holy of holies of Scripture. Facing the time of His departure and death, the Lord prayed for those who believed, or would believe (v. 20) on Him.

What was His prayer? That they should be one with the Father, with Him, and with one another. This had to be accomplished while they remained in this wicked world (see John 17:15-16). How? By the cleansing and sanctifying work of the truth.

The Word of God—the Bible—is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit in this work of sanctification. Small wonder that there is little holiness and spiritual unity when the Word has so little opportunity to touch and to cleanse. Reader, do you study God's Word?

Such separation to God will result in real spiritual unity between those of all denominations and creeds. It is not some artificial thing to be put on from the outside. It comes from the heart of man and reaches out into his life and into the lives of others.

II. Unity in Action (Acts 15:22-27). Satan tried to thwart the missionary efforts of the Church at the very outset by starting a doctrinal controversy.

Although the first council at Jerusalem (Acts 11) had decided that "to the Gentiles also has God granted repentance unto life," the question did not stay settled, for there were persistent Judaizing teachers who now contended that even though the Gentiles could be saved, they had to come into the church by way of Judaism and first fulfill the Jewish rite of circumcision.

The story of how this vital and fundamental question came up is found in the early verses of Acts 15. The entire future of the gospel ministry was in a sense dependent on the solution of this problem. Christianity is the only religious faith in the world that presents justification by grace as the way of redemption; all others follow (more or less) the path of salvation by works.

The question now was: Shall works of the law be mingled with grace? Can Jesus Christ alone save men, or is salvation through Jesus Christ plus something else?

How was such a serious question to be settled? Should argument and strife be permitted to go on until the stronger party prevailed? Better judgment indicated the desirability of a Christian method of settlement.

The final decision of the council is sent not only by Paul and Barnabas, but also by a committee from Jerusalem, a gracious gesture of fellowship.

As a matter of record (a wise procedure in such a case), a letter was sent which, after addressing the Gentiles as "brethren," reviewed the history of the matter and then, without mentioning circumcision at all, put upon the Gentiles "no greater burden than the necessary things." And what were those? Those things which relate to purity of life as those who were enjoying Christian liberty. The law of Moses need not be kept as a ground of salvation. They were saved by grace. But grace can never be the cloak of carefree living, nor can liberty in Christ be interpreted as license to live in sin. We are set free in Christ, not that we may sin, but that we may "go and sin no more."

III. Unity in Doctrine (Acts 15:28, 29).

In non-essentials we should exercise toward other believers the greatest love and consideration. Men have a right to differences of opinion, and must follow the dictates of their own consciences. Let us not be betrayed into controversy on such matters.

There are certain foundation doctrines which must be held if a church is to be Christian; concerning these we stand together. There is a faith for which we are to earnestly "contend" (Jude 3). We are never, even on the grounds of supposed courtesy, to give aid and comfort to false teachers (II John 9-11). Kindly, tactfully, but definitely the Christian Church must stand true to its doctrinal convictions, standing united against an unbelieving world, and if need be, an unbelieving religious world.

COME TO CHURCH

Creamed Comments On The Sunday School Lesson

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restrictions thus giving Paul and Barnabas the green light for continued missionary work. The decision was sent by a letter with the appointed messengers to Antioch. This letter became the Christian Magna Charta.

V. 20. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." It is a source of joy to know that mother is praying for us; how great should be our joy to know that the Lord is too strong to allow any division.

V. 21. "That they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe thou hast sent me." All Christians are to be one in loyalty to the Lord; when this is true, color, race, class, opinions, creeds and denominational differences will be very minor. The greatest appeal to sinners is in the spirit of love, united fellowship and harmony in professing Christians.

V. 22. "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one." The glory which is to be the possession of those who believe on Christ is in the fact they are children of God, the greatest privileges that can come to any creature; this can not be true of any other creatures but man. To live as if this was not important is to choose to belong to the class without hope of eternal life.

V. 23. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Christ's followers are to be perfect in love, that love which God gives his children, for the purpose of being such good witnesses that others may know that God works in the hearts of men.

V. 24. "Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barnabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren." After a controversy in the mother church at Jerusalem over the question of compulsory circumcision of Gentiles, a peaceful agreement was voted with certain

An Unbeliever Speaks
By Captain Milton B. Lessman

More than fifty cities are holding one-day conference for ministers and laymen to prepare for the united emphasis on lay evangelism planned by major Protestant denominations in 1946. Held in cooperation with local councils of churches and ministerial associations, the conferences are designed to train ministers and laymen in various phases of visitation evangelism.

The American Bible Society's 2nd annual Bible-reading campaign, from Thanksgiving to Christmas, will be conducted on a world-wide instead of a national basis this year, with Sunday December 3, designated as "Universal Bible Sunday." For the 34 days between Thanksgiving and Christmas, 34 Bible passages have been chosen through a canvas of men and women in the armed forces for whom the Scriptures have attained deep significance, and these

According to the "Christian Century," the premier of Japan recently invited missionaries who remained in Tokyo to his official residence, where he apologized for their "inconveniences and unpleasant experiences" during the war. He hoped that the missionaries would remain in Japan to assist in lifting what he spoke of as the "severely deteriorated morality" of the Japanese people.

DO YOU KNOW?

1. Which of the disciples was the first Christian martyr?

2. In what chapter is found the long prayer of the Lord?

3. In the long prayer of Christ what was the petition Christ offered for himself?

4. Why did Christ pray that all may be one?

5. What was the main controversy in Paul's accepting Gentile Christians?

ANSWERS TO "DO YOU KNOW?"

1. James, the brother of John.

2. St. John 17.

3. Glorify thy son that thy son may be glorified in thee.

4. That the world may know that thou hast sent me?

5. Circumcision.

CHURCHES

St. Mary's Church

Very Rev. Msgr. Seimetz, pastor

First Mass 6:00 a. m.

Second Mass 7:30 a. m.

Children's Mass 9:00 a. m.

High Mass 10:15 a. m.

Communion Sunday for children of Mary.

2:30 p. m. Holy Hour.

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Nuttman Ave. U. B.

C. N. Van Gundy, pastor

Sunday school 9:30 a. m.

Divine worship, 10:30 a. m.

Evening service, 7:30 p. m. The Rev. N. W. Bowman, returned missionary from Africa, will be the speaker for the evening service.

We extend our invitation to the people of Decatur to come to these services.

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First Baptist Church

Carey R. Moser, Pastor

9:25 a. m. Sunday School. C. E. Bell, Supt. An interesting class for every age.

10:15 a. m. Morning Worship. Sermon by the pastor. Theme: "Christian Strategy in a Chaotic World." Our choir will be present to furnish a special number in song. The Junior Church will also meet at this hour. Let us all make this day count for God and our community.

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First Presbyterian Church

"Five Points"

John W. McPheters, Jr., pastor

9:00 a. m. Bible Class, Mrs. W. A. Lower.

9:30 a. m. Church School. W. P. Schrock, Superintendent.

10:30 a. m. Morning Worship. Sermon by the minister. The Toddlers' Room is under the supervision of the World Friendship Guild.

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3:45 p. m. Women's Missionary Society Annual Praise Service.

Mrs. Leonard Saylors will give a book review on "Behold Your King."

6:00 p. m. Westminster Youth Fellowship. Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Ziner, sponsors.

—

7:00 p. m. Our Evening Service.

Here we feature a great mens choir. This mens group is growing so rapidly in size and interest that you cannot fail to hear them.

They will be singing tonight. Come and enjoy them. Other interesting features will also be enjoyed. Do not forget to come early. We begin promptly at seven o'clock.

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7:30 P. M. Wednesday. Our mid-week service of prayer and praise. This is the most important service in any church. Everyone welcome to this and all services.

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The First Evangelical Church

F. H. Willard, Minister

Sunday School 9:15 a. m. Gregg McFarland, Superintendent.

Morning Worship 10:10 a. m.

No Youth Fellowship or Evening service.

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District Youth Fellowship at Celia, Ohio Sunday afternoon and evening.

November Fellowship Service. Wednesday evening. "Carry in" supper at 6:30.

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