

Whose Prayer Will God Not Hear?

- Those who turn away from His law (Proverbs 28:9).
- Those who regard iniquity in their heart (Psalm 66:18).
- Those who do evil (I Peter 3:12).
- Those who are proud (Job 35:12).
- Those who sin (Isaiah 59:2).
- Those who ask "amiss" (James 4:3).



Whose Prayer Will God Hear?

- Those who worship Him (John 9:31).
- Those who are humble (Psalm 9:12).
- Those who are righteous (I Peter 3:12).
- Those who keep His commandments (I John 3:22).
- Those who pray earnestly (James 5:17).
- Those who pray in Christ's name (John 14:13,14).

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Faithful Sayings Olsen Park Church of Christ

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Services

9:30 a.m. Sunday: 10:20 a.m.

6:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Ken Ford Charles Kelley Pat Ledbetter

Deacons:

Dean Bowers Eddie Cook Bill Davis Pat Goguen Neil Ledbetter Jeff Nunn Fred Perez Rusty Scott

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

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Is Christ Divided?

he Amarillo phonebook lists seventyseven different "types" of churches who all affirm a belief in Jesus Christ. If we could visit the various services of these churches all at the same time we would find each of them doing different things, teaching different things, and operating under different organization. In our day

many are so accustomed to this diversity and confusion that they accept and even defend it. The American spirit of free choice and independent thought considers this desirable. We choose

our job, our home, our leaders, our favorite food, our favorite team—why not choose "the church of our choice?" Imagine a different time. Imagine a different place. Go back in your mind to a time before there were Protestants, Catholics, Evangelicals, Charismatics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians or Episcopalians. Was there ever a time



when there were just Christians? Could it ever be that way again?

When Jesus walked on the earth He declared, "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). After Jesus' death Paul spoke of this church which Christ "purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). It was established and existed in unity. Paul affirmed this when he told the Ephesians there is "one faith" and "one body" (Ephesians 4:4, 5). This church which belonged to Christ was not made up of different groups teaching and doing different things. Paul taught the "ways in Christ" —"everywhere in every church" (I Corinthians 4:17). Jesus did not establish denominations—He established one church which was His church.

Sadly, this unity of faith and practice was compromised very early. The church in Corinth, splintered into different factions with some declaring, "I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ'" (I Corinthians 1:12). In rebuke of this Paul asked them,

"Is Christ divided?" (I Corinthians 1:13). The inferred answer was no! This division was not an acceptable and authorized demonstration of free choice. Paul further asked rhetorically, "when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollo's,' are you not carnal?" (I Corinthians 3:4). The inferred answer here was yes! Division is "carnal"—a sinful act of the flesh. It is defiance of Jesus' prayer that, all who believe in Him "may be one" (John 17:21, 22).

If Paul taught that division was sinful—if Jesus prayed for believers to be one—how must the Lord view our world today? Is God pleased with the religious division of modern times? According to the Bible He is not, yet, how can this be corrected?

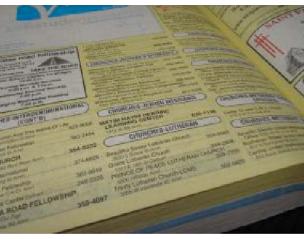
Although Jesus prayed for unity he also warned of religious error. Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15). He said further, "Many false prophets

will rise up and deceive many"

(Matthew 24:11). This tells us that there will be teachers who come along who seem as gentle and as innocent as sheep, but their message is wrong and deceptive. Paul taught Christian leaders in Ephesus, "From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:30). He wrote further, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers: and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (II Timothy 4:3-4). This creates a challenge for us—how can we avoid division and yet be certain to avoid religious error? Is it even possible?

The answer is yes! What if we wiped away all human traditions and denominational names? What if we trusted in the Bible alone as our guide for everything we do and teach? What if we resolved ourselves to do only those things the New Testament church did? What if all believers in Jesus came together in unity following these principles? What would we have? Simply Christians! Is it possible? Yes! Will we do it? That's the challenge.

By Kyle Pope



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