

August 15, 2021

The Plea Of The Seffner Church Of Christ

By Everett Hardin

We are under the divine injunction to “*speak as the oracles of God*” (I Pet. 4:11). Peter also said: “*Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” (I Pet. 3:14).

Our plea is not for ourselves, but for the Lord. In the words of Isaiah, “*Let us plead together*” (Isa. 43:26). I would hope that we would plead for the same things. The apostle Paul wrote: “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Cor. 1:10).

First, we plead for the existence of God. “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*” (Gen. 1:1). All things religiously right originate with and derive their meaning from God. We should have deep respect for God and for His wonderful works of the universe. “*Let all the earth fear the Lord: Let all the inhabitants of the earth stand in awe of him. For he spoke, and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast*” (Psa. 33:8-9). We must believe that He rewards them that diligently seek Him. “*But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb. 11:6). Atheism, whether real or practical, is a curse to humanity. “*The fool hath said in his heart there is no God*” (Psa. 14:1).

Second, we plead for the Deity and Sonship of Jesus Christ. In the beginning when the heavens and earth were created Christ already existed. He was not what some claim Him to be, a created being. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the father,) full of grace and truth*” (John 1:1,14). At least twice God said of Jesus, “*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Jesus said no man could come to the Father but by the Son. “*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6).

Third, we plead for the Holy Spirit. He was present in the creation. “*The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*” (Gen. 1:2). The Holy Spirit was present at the baptism of Jesus. “*He saw the Spirit of God, descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him*” (Matt. 3:16). The Spirit came on the apostles at Pentecost. “*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*” (Acts 2:4). In old time, “*holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (2 Pet. 1:21). He guided the apostles “*into all truth*” (John 14:25; 16:13). God’s inspired word (2 Tim. 3:16-17) is “*the sword of the Spirit*” (Eph. 6:17), by which men are convicted of sin (Acts 2:37; Heb. 4:12).

Fourth, we plead for submission to the authority of Christ. “*Why call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*” (Lk. 6:46). The word “*Lord*” means “*ruler*,” and there is no need to call Jesus ruler unless we are willing to be ruled by Him. Christ has “*all authority*” (Matt. 28:18), and He is the head of the church. God “*hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*” (Eph. 1:22-23). Any work or worship that cannot be shown to be directed by Jesus has

no scriptural relation to His church. We show respect for His authority by obeying His will.

Fifth, we plead the truth, God's Word. *"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31,32). A mere profession of belief is not enough. Our faith must be followed by obedience to His teaching. Sanctification can take place only if we are being governed by truth. *"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). The truth is desired in science, medicine, and law; but why not in religion? Can we know the truth? *"Whereby be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Eph. 5:17).

Sixth, we plead for the oneness of believers. This is the Lord's will. *"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may all be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hath sent me"* (John 17:20-21). Jesus prays that the unity of all believers resemble that which exists between the Father and the Son. Paul beseeches us *"to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace."* He reminds us that *"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Eph 4:3-6). Jesus promised to build one church (Matt.16:18), which implies His desire for oneness. Unity can be achieved only upon the basis of God's Word, and never upon the opinions of men.

Seventh, we plead for the salvation of all the lost. Jesus came to *"seek and save the lost"* (Luke 19:10). We are commanded to walk in His steps (I Pet. 2:21); therefore we must do the same. He said, *"Go teach all nations..."* (Matt. 28:18), and *"go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mk. 16:15). Think about the value of one soul. *"For what is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"* (Matt. 16:26). The things of the world are altogether not as valuable as the soul of man, and if one were to exchange his soul to gain the world it would be a transaction without profit. God's amazing grace has made salvation possible for all men. *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men"* (Tit. 2:1). Man must appropriate the benefits of God's grace and Christ's blood by obedience.

Eighth, we plead for the worship of one true God. *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve"* (Matt. 4:10). *"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). God is pleased when we worship Him, and that should cause us to look upon worship as an exalted privilege. What kind of worship does God desire? Those who worship in spirit and truth — those who engage in such items of worship as are commanded, and express their inner feelings, affections and desires through those revealed items of worship. To worship God after *"the doctrines and commandments of men"* renders such worship *"vain"* (Matt. 15:8-9).

Ninth, we plead for the holiness of saints. *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves as according to former lusts in your ignorance; But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written be holy for I am holy"* (I Pet. 1:14-16). We urge you to *"Lay aside the sin which does so easily beset us"* (Heb. 12:1), putting off the old man and *"putting on the new man"* (Eph. 2:22-24), Casting down *"the works of the flesh"* and producing *"the fruit of the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:19-23).

Tenth, we patiently plead for all men to do no more nor any less than the Lord requires to obtain the forgiveness of sins. *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mk. 16:16). Peter, by inspiration, commanded *"repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38). We plead with all men to accept the simple terms of

the gospel which a merciful and loving God has provided.

Having taken a glimpse of the place which the church has in the eternal plan of God, we can see that God's plan is for everyone to be a member of it. Hence, if you are outside of the church, you are unsaved (Acts 2:47), unreconciled (Eph. 2:16), and unaffected by Christ's blood (Acts 20:28). We make the appealing plea for all men to return to the Word of God as the standard in religion, casting aside all man-made creeds, manuals, disciplines and catechisms, which have supplanted the authority of God's Word. Jesus said, "*Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, and many such like things do ye*" (Mk. 7:13). We plead with all men to read and study the Bible for themselves, casting off all preconceived ideas and honestly and objectively considering its sacred contents. You need to obey the gospel in order to be saved and then, when you are saved, Christ will add you to His church (Acts 2:47). After being saved you need to work and serve God in it. May God bless us to that end, for therein alone is the safe way for all men. Will you begin now to submit to God's will for your life?
