

John 17

THE DISCIPLES PRAYER

Mat 6:6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. **6:7** But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. **6:8** Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. **6:9** After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. **6:10** Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. **6:11** Give us this day our daily bread. **6:12** And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. **6:13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. **6:14** For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: **6:15** But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus stands as if at the foot of the cross about to suffer, the agony and shame of the cross, He goes to the Father in prayer for Himself and the apostles.

This is also our Lord's High-priestly Prayer in which Jesus approached the throne of His heavenly Father on His people's behalf; standing on the threshold of his especial work as their great High Priest. The tone is tenderness and triumphant expectation. We see the feelings of the Man of Sorrows Isaiah prophesied.

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The Lord's Prayer speaks throughout of work accomplished, of victory gained, and of the immediate expectation of glorious reward. The prayer anticipates with perfect confidence the realization of the grand object of his coming,—the salvation of all that have been given Him. The prayer naturally divides itself into three parts; the first, Jesus prays for Himself, second, for His immediate disciples, and third, for all who, in every age, shall believe in Him.

He is the mighty Intercessor, Advocate, Mediator and High Priest standing between heaven and earth in full view of His coming sacrifice for the sins of the world. This is not the petition of an inferior being, but the dialogue of an equal, making declaration that His mission is done. He intercedes with the eternal God, the partner of His counsel, as the executor of His will of saving mercy. He looks back on His pre-incarnate glory with God and forward to the resumption of that glory. Jesus comprehended all His present and future disciples in an unbroken succession as a holy and blessed brotherhood in oneness and union with himself and his Father."—(*Schaff & the sermon notes*).

John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

The very attitude being stamped on the memory of John; "The hour" of the great sacrifice, of the tragedy of the cross, the hour for which Christ came into the world had now come; an awful humiliation for the Son of God to die as a malefactor. But, God would lift him from this humiliation to His former glory. Had Jesus been left in the tomb, the shame would have been complete. Now there is glorification of the Son, in His resurrection and exaltation, the glory of His self-sacrifice for you and I.

John 17:2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

It is by "giving Him all power in heaven and earth, committing all things" to Him, raising Him from the dead so that "He should give eternal life."

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

The knowledge of God as manifested in Jesus Christ is the first requisite to salvation and life eternal. The knowledge of God is recognition by the heart as well as the intellect, of God in Christ, and submission to Jesus, which brings eternal life. Not God alone but God manifested in the flesh as Jesus for cf:

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Now he had finished his work on earth.

In a few hours he would cry from the cross, "It is finished."

John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

In this prayer the word Father occurs six times. Jesus never says, "Our Father," nor "My Father," which would separate Him from us, but "Father." He asks a restoration of his former glory, that He had before he took on Himself human form.

John 17:6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

In the first five verses he had prayed for himself. Now he prays for his disciples, which are to become His apostles.

He "manifested the name by revealing the Father in himself.

John 17:7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

Jesus taught with great emphasis He and the Father were one, that His words and works were of the Father.

As all was of God it would stand firm and eternal, in spite of the cross.

John 17:8 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, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

The life, teaching and miracles of Jesus had produced profound faith in his disciples, but they staggered when he told he was about to die. These long and tender discourses for their preparation and they have had the desired effect.

John 16:29-30 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. 16:30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Thus they repeat their declaration of love and faith.

John 17:9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

He prays for the apostles. This prayer from verse 9 to verse 19 is for others. Now, however, his petition is confined to the apostles, the little band upon whom the future conquest of the world hangs.

Jesus other places even bids us to pray for our enemies.

Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

John 17:10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

Christ's glory here upon the earth is manifested by his disciples; 1. Because they are the Father's; 2. To them is entrusted the work of manifesting the glory of redeeming love. They are to proclaim the gospel to the whole world.

John 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*.

He now goes to the Father; these Apostles are to be left behind to preach the gospel, establish His kingdom – known as the Church of Christ, and manifest His glory. He prays they may be kept "one," united as the Father and the Son. Often the disciples had shown selfish jealousies and ambitions, but now they must be a united band of loving brothers and one family of believers.

John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Only Judas, the traitor, the son of perdition was lost as the scriptures had prophesied cf:

Psalms 41:9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me.

Zechariah 11:15-17 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. 11:16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, *which* shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one,

nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. 11:17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword *shall be* upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

John 17:13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

I am now coming to thee, and about to leave the world.

John 17:14 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.

I have entrusted to them the word of the Lord, to preach the gospel to men.

John 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

The world had hated the Master and was about to slay him, because he was not of the world. So it would hate the apostles, and seek to slay them; they have a work to do. Like him, they are to be "separate from sinners, and undefiled".

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

To sanctify is to render holy, to consecrate. Those who are sanctified are the saints. The means this sanctification is the truth. Christ adds, "Thy word is truth." The apostles needed that consecration for the work named in the next verse.

John 17:18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

They were to be sent into the world to work and suffer, as the Father has sent the Son.

John 17:19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

When he gave himself to death. We sanctify ourselves when we "present our bodies as living sacrifices."

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. **12:2** And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

John 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

We enter upon the third section of the prayer, that for all disciples in every age, a prayer for us, for all who should believe on the Lord through the preaching of the gospel by the apostles.

John 17:21 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 that thou hast sent me.

This is a prayer for the closest union among the saints. As the Father and Son are one Christians are to be one. The Lord all through this discourse has shown the intimate union and oneness between the Father and Himself. They have no separate will, kingdom, or interests.

Such a union is demanded among the disciples of Christ. It is impossible while we are divided into various denominations. Denominationalism is utterly opposed by this prayer, and every division disloyal to the spirit of this prayer. These denominations are factions, "all are not perfectly joined together, into one family. Church quarrels and sectarian divisions destroys unity. We would speedily convert the world if we were one. The most potent argument of the infidel against the Kingship of Christ is that He has not power to unite His followers.

1Corinthians 1:10-13 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* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. **1:11** For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. **1:12** Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. **1:13** Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

John 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

John 17:23 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.

This resulted in their unity.

Christ gives to his disciples the glory of becoming the sons of God

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:

I John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

John 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

That in due time all Jesus' disciples shall follow Him to heaven, where we all shall see the glory of Christ.

John 17:25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

The world knew not God, and Christ came to reveal Him.

He had revealed Him to His disciples and they would reveal Him to the world.

John 17:26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Thus we see in Christ Jesus the character and the love of God and find joy in the blessings of His service.

We Have Learned

1. Our Lord prayed for Himself, not for temporal benefits, but for eternal glory. So, too, we may pray, but not that we may have more to spend upon our own lusts, but rather let us pray for consecration in His service.

2. We should especially pray for what the Lord prayed, that first we in this congregation may be one as He and the Father are one.

Every saint ought to speak, labor and pray for the unity of those who are leaving and those who have left the Churches of Christ.

2Ti 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

3. We cannot pray the prayer of Jesus and labor to build up sectarianism. In the spirit of love we should oppose it, and labor to do away with sectarian names, creeds, organizations and interests. As the Son and the Father are one, have one work, one kingdom, one spirit, one interest, so must all that are Christ's.

Ephesians 1:22-23 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, 1:23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Eph 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eph 4:4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

4. Division is the shame of Protestants. The Catholics point to it and exclaim, "Is Christ divided?" Infidels point to it and say, "This is Babylon, confusion. All is uncertainty. These people cannot see alike or agree." As long as this division prevails the world will be unconverted.

5. It is one thing to preach union, and another to have the spirit of union.

No one has it unless the love of Christ abides in their heart. A church, rent with antagonism, defeats the Savior's prayer.

The man who preaches union with a narrow, exclusive, sectarian spirit in his

heart, defeats Christ's will.

He who preaches union must be so filled with Christ's love that he will extend his hand to all who love the Master.

THE LORD'S PRAYER FOR UNITY

The most remarkable feature of this wonderful portion of the word of God is the Lord's prayer for those who would believe upon him in the coming ages. It seems as if the very climax of earnestness is reached when he travails in soul for the saints who in after times, should be gathered to him from out of the world by the preaching of the gospel. Such a prayer uttered with such heartfelt fervency, right at the foot of the cross, should have a pre-eminent sacredness for every believer in every age; in other words, for every subject of the prayer, and no one upon whose heart rests the petition that came from the Savior's heart can refuse to do all in his power to secure the results for which the Master prayed. Indeed, one who could harbor a thought in opposition to that for which the Lord travails in soul, certainly has some other spirit rather than that of Christ.

There is just one thought in this petition and that one thought is the unity of his people. A analysis of the petition in their behalf will show how this burden rested upon his soul. He prays (1) "That they all may be *one*;" (2) "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be *one* in us;" (3) He prays for the *oneness* "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me;" (4) "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them that they may be *one*, as we are *one*;" (5) "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in *one*, even as we are *one*." Four times the petition goes to the Father for their oneness, such unity as that of the Son and the Father, and as this divine unity is secured by a reciprocal indwelling, so he asks that believers may be in him and that he may dwell in them by the Holy Spirit, in order that they may keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Hence, as the Father hath given him glory, he imparts the same glory to them that they may be one. Finally he asks for this oneness because without it the world will not be brought to the faith.

No true disciple can appropriate this prayer without the deep conviction that all that hinders the "oneness" prayed for, is sinful, in disobedience to the will of both the Father and the Son, and calculated to defeat the object of Christ's coming into the world. What opposes this oneness is *Anti-christ*. It becomes him, therefore, to ascertain what this petition really asks for and to see that his own course is in harmony with the Lord's will, as revealed in the prayer. While the

word *church* is not named, all concede that in praying for the unity of believers the Lord prays for the unity of the body into which believers are gathered. It will aid in ascertaining his meaning to see the characteristics of the early church in which we know that he dwelt by his Spirit. Its history tells that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32), and that "walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit they were multiplied" (Acts 9:31). Here, then, was oneness, oneness of heart and soul in one body, and the result is that the world believed upon Christ, and the believers were multiplied. These early Christians fulfilled the conditions of the Savior's prayer and the results in behalf of which he prayed, followed.

These believers, though in a few years counted by tens of thousands, composed of Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, and scattered through western Asia and southern Europe, were only *one body*, and the different members of this body were bound to each other by the most indissoluble ties. A favorite figure of Paul is the likeness of the church to the human body, which is composed of various members but all with one life, interest and mutual dependence upon each other. No less than twelve times he speaks of the church as the body of which Christ is the Head, often emphasizing the fact that there is but *one* body. "In one Spirit ye are baptized into one body and all partake of one spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). Taking Jews and Gentiles Christ "makes in himself of two *one* new man, so making peace, that he might reconcile both to God in *one body*" (Eph. 2:15, 16). In the apostolic age there was no thought of *bodies* of Christians. The church was a unit. All the figures point to its unity. There is one kingdom; the Lord says, "I will build my *church*;" he is the Bridegroom and the church is the *bride*; "there is one fold, and one shepherd; the "one loaf" on the Lord's table Paul tells us represents the "one body;" there is one Head even as there is one body, and [258]

Paul (Eph. 4:3-6) commands us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and names seven characteristics that imply and compel unity. "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."

On the one hand we have these emphatic declarations of the unity of the church, and on the other the strongest rebuke of divisions, schisms and sects. The word *hairesis* occurs nine times in the Greek of the New Testament, is rendered four times *heresies*, and five times *sect*. It always means a split, or sect, and is

condemned as one of the works of the flesh. Anything that divides God's people is a *hairesis*, and a sect comes under the strongest condemnation.

It is clear from this examination of the Scriptures that the oneness prayed for by the Savior is inconsistent with the existence of denominationalism. It implies the breaking down of all divisions among the people of God as completely as those between Jew and Gentile were destroyed by the cross so as to mold them into one body. It implies such unity between all saints as exists between the various members of the human body. It implies oneness of life and of spirit, in one body under one Lord. Such a union, one that would unite all believers into one army, take away the reproach of Zion, and oppose a solid front to the adversary, would cause the world at once to believe that the Father sent Christ into the world. In order that this unity may have an effect upon the world it must be seen; hence there must be organic unity that it may be visible. Such unity did exist in the apostolic ages but then there were no sects; it has not existed since the apostasy and will not be restored until God's people all stand together as *one* body, having *one* spirit, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* calling, *one* hope, *one* Father. The fiction of an invisible church and an invisible unity does not meet the demand.

A unity that introduces religious rivalry into every country village, that refuses to unite in combined effort to save the world, that breaks up the soldiers of the cross into guerrilla bands rather than combine them into one great and invincible army, and that breaks to pieces at the door of the church or the communion table, has none of the conditions of that oneness for which the Savior prayed. Those conditions will never be met, until "all the multitude of them that believe are of one heart and soul." For this consummation all who love the Lord ought to labor and to pray.

I am well pleased to give, as an evidence of the increasing sense of the need of unity, the following passage from a published discourse of Dr. John Fulton, a leading Episcopal minister: "Unless I have greatly misunderstood one of our Savior's most solemn utterances, I suspect that our divisions are worse than negatively unchristian; in their effects they are decidedly *anti-christian*. What else can our Lord have meant when he prayed to the Father, 'that they may all be one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me?' If these affecting words mean anything, is it not that, in some way or other, the unity of Christ's followers is a divine condition of the conversion of the world? If that is his meaning, then is

not every needless division treason to the kingdom of Christ? And, to speak very practically, what can it be but treason to permit the helplessness caused by our divisions to hand over to perdition, so far as we are concerned, perhaps more souls than our divided ministry is saving? With what consistency are we spending millions of money in foreign missions, while the wasteful wantonness of our denominational divisions, together with the crippled inefficiency which is caused by them, is virtually and needlessly consigning more thousands of our own countrymen to heathenism in one year than all our missionaries put together have ever converted in five? God forbid that I should disparage any effort to spread his Gospel at home or abroad; but while we are rejoicing over the heathen whom we save, let us not forget the account we have to give of the heathen whom our divisions are making by the thousand in every great city of this land."-

Sources: KJV, e-Sword, Clarke's Commentary, and B.W. Johnson Commentary.