

Congregational handout; outline sermon text on following pages

Notes & References

Jesus Prays for His Church
John 17:20-26

April 9, 2017

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^A Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8

^B Luke 9:23; Colossians 1:27; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 John 3:2; Philippians 1:23-24;

2 Corinthians 5:8; Psalm 17:15, 27:4

^C 1 John 4:8

A. Who is Included? 17:20

1. verse 20: **I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word**

- a. the body of believers as the fruit of Jesus Christ's itinerant ministry
 - (A) primarily the eleven with Him in the upper room
 - (B) the larger group of followers of which the 500 brethren to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection formed a part
 - (C) the women who followed and supported Jesus when in Galilee
- b. the fruit of the ministry of Jesus' apostles
 - (A) those who in future would come to believe in Jesus
 - (B) their faith being the result of the gospel word of the apostles
 - (C) the result of the great commission – **"19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."** (Matthew 28:19-20)

2. Apostles' Ministry

- a. As recorded in book of Acts
 - (A) that commission was expressed in other words, **"but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."** (Acts 1:8)
 - (B) some have commented that this book should not be called "The Acts of the Apostles" but rather, "The Acts of the Risen Lord," or even better, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit"
 - (C) for in its second chapter are recorded the coming of the Holy Spirit in power upon the disciples – more than just the eleven – and the preaching of the gospel with 3,000 added to the church
- b. As continuing throughout history by the apostolic writings
 - (A) for the proclamation of the gospel did not cease with the death of the eleven apostles
 - (B) indeed, already, many were added who took up the gospel word
 - (1) Stephen the martyr
 - (2) Philip the evangelist
 - (3) Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Mark... the list goes on
 - (C) furthermore, it was by the apostles, or those trained by them, that the four gospels recording the life and

- words of Jesus were written; from these many have since come to believe in Jesus
- (D) then, their further writing as letters to Christian believers, would confirm people in their faith and explain and apply the gospel to the lives of believers
- (E) and this brings His prayer down to this very present time
- c. for those who have gone ahead of us, for us, and for those who will come after us, Christ is now praying.

B. Christian Unity 17:21-23

1. Verses 21-23: 21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. 22 And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

2. The Foundation of Unity

a. The Unity of the Father & the Son in the Trinity

- (A) this unity is founded upon truth – there is no sacrifice here of doctrine – particularly the doctrine on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ – for the sake of bringing together those who are of divided opinions
- (B) the unity of Father & Son – an inherent, not an imposed unity – underlies these three verses – that the Son’s entrance into the world and His ministry there is all according to the Father’s will
- (C) that the Father’s attitude to; the incarnate Son is unchanged from that which existed from eternity: unqualified love
- (D) so the unity of believers is founded upon the Revelation of God as found in Jesus Christ and recorded in the Scriptures
 - (1) about a century ago, some major denominations united
 - (2) the theology of one emphasised God’s sovereignty
 - (3) that of another, the freedom of man in spiritual matters
 - (4) these were dropped, and along with them, the belief in the Scriptures as God’s word: so that denomination came to have no raison d’être other than a human social institution
 - (5) true Christian unity is more than such, involving ...

b. The Mutual Abiding of God & His Children

- (A) such abiding as exists in the Godhead should exist in us
 - (1) v 21: “even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us”
 - (2) v 23: “I in them, and Thou in Me”

- (B) what Jesus has explained in John 15 respecting the vine and the branches, the necessity of abiding in order for us to bear fruit, He now prays for believers
 - (C) only that abiding can bring real unity to God's people
 - (D) it is a unity brought about by the love of God: v23, "and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me"; next we see:
- c. The Entrusting of God's Glory to Believers
- (A) v 22: "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one;"
 - (B) this is an amazing statement – that we should partake of the Glory of the incarnate Son of God – that glory which the Father had given to Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Immanuel
 - (C) this same glory Jesus is entrusting to us
 - (D) for what purpose? ... that we should be one, be united
 - (E) now I have some trouble seeing such glory in me when I look in the mirror – you most likely do, too – so we shall return to this
- d. The Degree of this Unity
- (A) v 21: "that they may all be one, even as Thou, Father ..."
 - (1) then that unity is described by the mutual abiding of the Father and of the Son in One another
 - (2) but the description of the nature of this unity is resumed in
 - (B) v 22: "that they may be one, just as We are one"
 - (1) not that the unity of Christians one with another is identical to the of the unity of the members of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 - (2) it cannot be so, for their Unity is eternal and perfect
 - (3) but is, nevertheless, part of the perfection of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit
 - (C) v 23: "that they may be perfected in unity"
 - (1) here the limitations of our English, or perhaps any earthly, language fail us, for this looks forward to a future time to something that is conceived as already having been done
 - (2) "that they should have been made perfect or complete in unity or one" – it is this degree of unity that will put into effect ...
3. The Witness by Unity
- a. once more we find the parallel message in verses 21 and 23
 - b. v 21: "... that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me."

- c. v 23: "... that the world may know that Thou didst send Me ..."
- d. such God-given unity will be a powerful witness of the Gospel
 - (A) that there is a God in heaven who cares for mankind
 - (B) that Jesus Christ is the Divine Messenger of that God
- e. there is one result of such a witness: acceptance of the gospel word
 - (A) that touches the heart and will with faith
 - (B) that touches the mind with conviction
- f. Lee Strobel's, 'The Case for Christ' – Chicago investigative journalist; atheist – wife coming to faith – Lee marshalling all his legal talent to refute the claims of Christ – came to faith himself – now a movie – such a document can touch the minds with proof
- g. Christians living in unity make as convincing a case; Christians in strife as was the church at Corinth are tools of the devil

C. Christian Glory 17:22, 24

1. Glory Present

- a. v 22: [And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one](#)
- b. I said that this is a wondrous thought, that we should partake of the glory that is Jesus of Nazareth
- c. yet you must understand that this has a dark side: because for Jesus, this gift of glory had a four-fold involvement: the cross, the empty tomb, the departure into heaven, the sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high
 - (A) so Jesus said, '[And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."](#)' (Luke 9:23)
 - (B) so this glory that is like that of Jesus Christ, has as its starting point, a humiliation also like unto that of Jesus Christ: the cross
- d. but nevertheless, for believers this is an inestimable glory
 - (A) first of all, that the God of all creation desires to dwell in those whom He has redeemed from sin, the curse and death
 - (B) a privilege not limited to one nation, but, to all mankind, as Colossians 1:27, "[to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.](#)" (Colossians 1:27)
 - (C) a privilege in which the Holy Spirit is at work even now, "[17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the](#)

Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

- (D) and not only at the present time, but “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.” (1 John 3:2); so, there is ...

2. Glory to Come

- a. v 24: Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.
- b. so the desire of the Lord – or even, as the AV translates, the will of the Lord – and the desire of His servant are one; united & unified – to be the one with the other; that we can gaze upon His face
- (A) “23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.” (Philippians 1:23-24)
- (B) “we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:8)
- c. Jesus prayed, “that they may behold My glory” of which Martin Luther said, “we should make this sentence our pillow, and a bed of down for our souls, and with a glad heart repair (go) to it when the happy hour draws nigh.”
- d. and Charles Gabriel wrote
- When by the gift of His infinite grace,
I am accorded in heaven a place,
Just to be there and to look on His face
Will through the ages be glory for me. –{2}.
- e. and this desire is the fulfilment, not only for the NT, but also the OT, saints – that we together should see God in His Glory
- (A) “As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake.” (Psalms 17:15)
- (B) “One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to meditate in His temple.” (Psalms 27:4)

D. Love & Knowledge 17:25-26

1. Verses 25-26: 25 O righteous Father, although the world has not known Thee, yet I have known Thee; and these

have known that Thou didst send Me; 26 and I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them.

- a. the requests of Jesus' High-Priestly prayer are complete
 - (A) but the conversation of the Son with the Father continues
 - (B) the disciples, and we, are privileged to listen in
 - (C) as the Son shares His most intimate thoughts with His Father
- b. He has addressed the Father, as "Holy Father" (verse 11) – the one who the Highest, being far above and beyond His creation, and far above and beyond the understanding of its inhabitants
- c. now He is addressed as "righteous Father" – the one who will do that which is just – that those who accept the Son's perfect sacrifice for sin will be saved – that those who reject this gift of the Son will be lost
- d. there are two reasons that this will be so

2. Personal Knowledge

- a. there are two groups in this world – only two
 - (A) those who have accepted that Jesus Christ has entered the world to reveal God to mankind and thereby to save sinners
 - (B) those who deny God and Christ and any such truth
 - (C) and these two groups are forever diametrically opposed
- b. so that Jesus taught His disciples to refer to God as "our Father", while the other group is "of their father, the devil."
- c. and that term, 'Father', if we had no other verse or doctrine to go by, is sufficient to draw graphically the knowledge relationship existing between the Christian and God – one intimately known like a father
- d. a relationship marked by ...

3. Personal Love

- a. "God is love" says 1 John 4:8
- b. there existing an eternal love within the Persons of the Godhead
- c. and now, not only for, but in us: "that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them."
- d. we would conclude from this that the pledge of God's love in us, is the residence of God the Son in our lives

E. Conclusion – what wonderful truth in these words of Jesus Christ – and the half has never been told!

References:

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NLT	New Living Translation © 1996 Tyndale Charitable Trust
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 National Council of Churches of Christ
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of the commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- Bruce – The Gospel & Epistles of John, by F. F. Bruce, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; 1983
- BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
- NICNT – The New International Commentary on the New Testament
The Gospel according to John, by Leon Morris
- NTC – New Testament Commentary, by William Hendriksen; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1954
- RWP – Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament, by Dr. A. T. Robertson
- TTBC – Thru the Bible Commentary Series, by J. Vernon McGee; John 11-21; Thomas Nelson Publishers; 1991

2. '*The Glory Song,*' by Charles H. Gabriel (1856-1932)