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CHRIST'S HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER

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Christ's intercessory prayer for His disciples is recorded in John 17. It has been said this is an example of the prayer Jesus is now offering at the right hand of the Father. He had now finished His earthly ministry (verse 4), though the cross still lay before Him. He does not pray for the world, lying in sin and darkness, but for His own. "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me: for they are thine." (John 17:9). "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." (Verse 11).

I.—In Thy Name

Jesus was jealous for the name of His Father, the "living God." During His earthly ministry His followers were known simply as the disciples of Christ, but when the Church was launched on the day of Pentecost, henceforth believers were known by the name, "Church of God"—the Father's name. While later on, believers became divided and called by many names, Jesus kept them during His earthly ministry only in the Father's name,—God, Father, and Creator of us all. "I have kept them in Thy name."

II.—Not of the World

"The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," (Verse 14). Jesus and the New Testament writers used no uncertain terms denoting the separation which exists between the people of God, and the world. Even Abraham, with far less light, acknowledged himself to be a "pilgrim and stranger on the earth, seeking a city to come, whose building and maker is God." God calls His children "children of light," while the world lieth in darkness. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (I. John 2:15). "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (Verse 16).

III.—Sanctify Them

No distortion of the English language can make out that these disciples for whom Christ prayed were not converted men. Their names were written in heaven. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy to wait for the promise of the Father, "and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." (Luke 24:52-53). One can note the tenderness in Jesus' tones and heart as He continues, "And for THEIR sakes I sanctify myself." That is, using the usual dictionary definition, "I set myself apart for this sacred use." Forever dedicated to the Father's will, and one with Him; but now in a new sense He shows the way to entire sanctification by dedicating Himself to that purpose. Man must set himself apart for a sacred use. It is God's part to

cleanse: "Sanctify them through thy truth." Jesus suffered without the gate, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood." (Heb. 13:12).

Frances Ridley Havergal wrote a beautiful poem on consecration, as follows,—

"Take my life, and let it be,
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee,—
Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.

"Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee;
Take my voice, and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.

"Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages for Thee;
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.

"Take my will, and make it Thine,—
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart,—it is Thine own,—
It shall be Thy royal throne!"

Oh, for a real consecration which takes in the entire being for God! Then He will sanctify wholly, purifying hearts "by faith." Nor did He pray for the disciples of His day alone, "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (Verse 20).

IV.—That They All May be One

Jesus well knew that His disciples were not one at this time, and also that if divided, the world would mock, though each proclaimed his loyalty to Christ, and that a divided body could not be as strong as one united,—every thinking person knows this to be true; hence His tender concern when He prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth, * * * 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." (Verse 21). While some, defending the denominational system, maintain that in this way all the truth is stressed as it would not be otherwise, that to use different names is like unto the different names in a family, such as John, James, Mary, etc. Yet, the fruits of division in the body of Christ have been evil. Jesus was very solicitous for the little group of disciples starting out to evangelize the world, that they should be one. Paul was very solicitous indeed that no division creep into the churches, not only exhorting the unity, but reproving those sharply who brought in divisions as being "carnal." "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. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" (I. Cor. 1:12-13; 3:4).

Paul further said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions * * * and avoid them," not follow them, (Rom. 16:17). Who can truthfully say that Christendom would not have been stronger, and would have accomplished more, had all been "baptized into one body" by the Holy Ghost, and remained so. The most tragic thing is the divisions among those who say they are sanctified.

Some time ago a business man,—saved, and in full sympathy with full salvation, when told of a threatened split among holiness people, said, "How can they thus divide the body of Christ? Something is wrong. The holy people profess that holiness unites. Some prayer meetings had better be held for the brethren who seek division." Some, party to divisions, maintain that Jesus meant spiritual unity, not corporate; but so long as God's people are in different folds, most of them will have a divided loyalty between the group of believers which they have joined, and Christ, the head of the Church. It cannot be otherwise. While full fellowship is maintained with that group, only a lesser fellowship is maintained with the entire body of Christians. Jesus certainly means that a like fellowship should exist among all His body. If the present system does not tend to that fellowship for which Jesus prayed, then a way should be found to bring all into the fellowship for which He, as that which He has with the Father, who are one. None of us can change the present system by legislation, but we can personally have that attitude which refuses to be bound by ecclesiastical fences, and have fellowship with all of God's people, and strive for that unity, "the more excellent way."

No group of believers has a corner on this fellowship; nor does any born-again Christian resent the doctrine of the one Church, when rightly understood and practiced. All believers are born into the Church of God, and why should drawing attention to that fact bring resentment from any except those determined to defend denominationism? We make the best we can of conditions as they are, which are far from ideal, but press on to the ideal for which our Saviour prayed.

V.—Will Jesus' Prayer be Answered?

Have any of Jesus' prayers to the Father been refused and to all time unanswered? Jesus was not praying for heavenly conditions (there must be perfect fellowship in heaven,—God help us to practice it now), but for a certain condition to be brought about on earth, even the oneness of His disciples.

While in India, we attended several missionary conventions, and do not remember of one in which it was not stressed how Jesus is grieved over our divisions in His body, and reference made to His prayer, that His Church might be one. One can not say that this is prompted by the devil, the author of

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