

THE HIGH PRIEST'S LORD'S PRAYER

"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 be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them: that they may be one, even as We are one: 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.

"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. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. 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."

Notice the Lord's prayer here, and not the so-called Lord's prayer which is really a prayer for the disciples explaining to them how to pray, or a model prayer. But in this prayer Jesus Christ is praying in His humanity to God the Father for us:

Verse 1, Father. Verse 5, O Father. Verse 11, Holy Father. Verse 21, Father. Verse 24, Father. Verse 25, O righteous Father. WE ALWAYS PRAY TO GOD THE FATHER, WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THIS GREAT PLAN OF SALVATION FOR US.

The remainder of this prayer reaches out to all generations of believers to the end of time, which includes us here in the Church Age. **This is a prayer for you. Jesus Christ had you in mind when He uttered this prayer.** We may incidentally note that it shows that Jesus Christ did not anticipate a speedy end of the history of the world or the Church, and also that it breathes but one desire, that **for**

the Church's unity, as though He saw what would be its greatest peril.

Characteristically, too, of the idealism of this Gospel is that there is no name for that future community. There is not called "Church" or congregation, or the like, it is to "Them also that believe on Me through their word," a great spiritual community, held together by common faith in Christ, whom the apostles preached. Is not that still the best definition of Christians, and does not such a conception of it correspond better to its true nature than the formal abstraction, "the Church," and this church or that church, or denominations?

We can but touch in the most inadequate fashion the profound words of the section of the Lord's prayer before us now, which would take volumes to fitly expound. It contains four periods, in each of which something is ASKED OR STATED, AND THEN A PURPOSE TO BE ATTAINED BY THE PETITION OR STATEMENT IS SET FORTH. Jesus Christ prayed for us, and these petitions are according to the plan of God the Father and must be fulfilled and are fulfilled and give us a sense of security and comfort and encouragement.

Before Jesus Christ went to the cross He prayed for us and then He died for us. He preceded His death, burial, resurrection and ascension by this, our Lord's prayer for us. **He had us in mind before He went to the cross, during the cross and after the cross, as He is now sitting on the right hand of God the Father, making intercession for us, representing us there while we represent Him here.**

THE FIRST PETITION IS FOR UNITY. For unity and the answer to this prayer will have the effect of verse 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 what Christ's desire was for us.**

Now in this verse the unity of believers is principally regarded as resulting from the inclusion, if we may so say, of **them all in the**

prayer of the ineffable union of the Father and the Son. Jesus Christ prays that “they may be one, and also that they may be one in Us.” This unity is no mere matter of formal external organization, nor of unanimity of creed, or the like, but it is a deep, vital unity. **The pattern of it is the unity of the Father and the Son, and the power that brings it about is the abiding of all believers “in Us.”**

The result of such a manifestation in the world of a multitude of men, in all of whom one life evidently moves, fusing their individualities while retaining their personalities, will be the world’s conviction of the Divine mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, “That Thou hast sent Me.” The world was beginning to feel its convictions moving slowly in that direction when it exclaimed, “Behold how these Christians love one another.” The alienation of Christians has given barbs and feathers to its arrows of scorn. **But it is “the unity of the Spirit,” not that of a great corporation, that Christ’s prayer desires.**

The petitions for what would be given to believers passes for a moment into a statement of what Jesus Christ had already given to them. He had begun the unifying gift and then made a plea for its perfecting. The “glory” which He had given to these poor bewildered Galileans was but in a rudimentary stage, but still, **whenever there is faith in Christ, there is some communication of His life and Spirit, and some of that veiled yet radiant glory, “full of GRACE and Truth,”** which shone through the covering when the incarnate Word “became flesh.”

It is the Christ-given Christ-likeness in each which knits believers into one. It is Christ in us and we in Christ that fuses us into one, and thereby makes each perfect, or complete. And such flashing back of the light of Jesus Christ from a million separate crystals, all glowing with one light and made one in the light, would flash on darkest eyes the lustre of the conviction that God sent Christ, and that God’s love enfolded those Christ-like souls even as it enfolded Him.

Again in verse 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.” Here is a petition with a result. Here there is no mention of the effect of the answer on the world. For the moment, the thoughts of isolation in, and a message to, the world fade away. The partially possessed glory, seems to have led on Christ’s thoughts to the calm home of perfection waiting for Him who was “not of the world,” and was sent into it, and for the humble ones who had taken Him for Lord.

“I will that,” that is a strange tone for prayer. What consciousness on Christ’s part does it involve? The disciples are not now called, “that they should believe on Me,” but “that which Thou hast given Me.” The individuals melt into the great whole. **They are Christ’s, and not merely by their faith or man’s preaching, but by the Father’s gift.** And the fact of that gift is used as a plea with Him, “to perfect that which concerneth” them, and to complete the unity of believers with Jesus by bringing them to be “with Him” in His triumphant session at the right hand.

To “behold” will be the same as to share His glory, not only that which we beheld when He tabernacled among us, but that which He had in the pouring out of Him of God’s love, “before the foundation of the world.” Our dim eyes cannot follow the happy souls as they are lost in the blaze, but we know that they walk in light and are like Him, for they “see Him as He is.”

The last statement, verses 25 and 26. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. 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.” THIS IS NOT A PETITION, BUT A VOW AND TO OUR EARS A PROMISE. The contrast of the world and believers appears for the last time. What made the world a world was its not knowing God. **What made believers isolated in, and having an errand to the world, was that they “knew,” not merely believed, but knew by experience, that Jesus Christ was sent from God the Father to make known His Name.**

All our knowledge of God comes through Him, Jesus Christ. It is for us to recognize His Divine mission and then He will unveil, more and more, with blessed continuity of increasing knowledge, the Name, and with growing knowledge of it growing measures of God's love will be in us, and Jesus Christ Himself will " dwell in our hearts by faith," more completely and blessedly through an eternity of wider knowledge and more fervent love.

Verse 24, the folded flock. " I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory." This wonderful Lord's prayer is for one, Jesus Christ Himself, and two, for the apostles, and three, for the whole Church on Earth, and also in Heaven.

THE PRAYER.

" I will" has a strange ring of authority. It is the expression of His love to man, and His longing for their presence with Him in His glory. **Not till they are with Him there, shall He " see the travail of His soul and be satisfied."**

We have here a glimpse of the blessed state of the dead in Christ:

A. LOCAL PRESENCE WITH CHRIST.

His glorified body is somewhere. The value of this thought is that it gives solidity to our ideas of a future life. There they are. We need not dwell on the metaphysical difficulties about locality for disembodied spirits. If a spirit can be localized in a body, I suppose it can be localized without a body. But passing by all that, we have the hope held out here for **a real local presence with the glorified humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

We speak of the dead as gone from us, and we have that idea far more vividly in our minds than of their having gone to Him. We speak of the "departed," but we forget, " He is not here. He is risen." " Why seek ye the living among the dead?" If we could only bring home to our souls the solid prose of the conviction that where Christ is, there His servants are, and that not in the diffused ubiquity of His Divine omnipresence, it would go far to remove the darkness and vague mist which trap the future, and to set it as it really is before us, as a solid definite reality.

We see the sails glide away out into the west as the sun goes down, and we think of them as tossing on a midnight sea, an unfathomable waste. Try to think of them more truly, as in the old miracle, He comes to them walking on the water in the night watch, and if at first they are terrified, His voice brings back hope to the mind that is beginning to stand still, and immediately they are at the land whither they go.

Now as they sink from our sight, they are in port, sails furled and anchor dropped, and green fields around them, even while we watch the sinking masts, and cannot yet rightly tell whether the fading sail has faded wholly.

B. COMMUNION WITH CHRIST. Only our Lord says not only " That where I am, they also may be," but adds " with Me." That is not a superfluous addition, but **emphasizes the thought of a communion which is more intimate and blessed than local presence alone would be.** The communion here is real, but imperfect. It is perfected there on our part by the dropping away of flesh and sin, by change of circumstances, by emancipation from cares and toils necessary here, by the development of new powers and surroundings, and on His side by new manifestations.

C. VISION OF HIS GLORY. The crown of this utterance of Christ's will is " That they may behold My glory." In an earlier part of this Lord's prayer, our Lord had spoken of the " Glory which I had with Thee before the world was." But probably the glory, given is not that of essential Divinity, but that of His mediatorial work. **To His people "with Him where He is," are imparted fuller views of Christ as Saviour, deeper notions of His work, clearer perception of His rule in providence and nature.** This is the loftiest employment of the spirits who are perfected and lapped in " pleasures for evermore," by their union with the glorified Christ. **Surely this is grander than all metaphorical pictures of Heaven.**

SECONDLY, THE INCIPIENT FULFILLMENT NOW GOING ON. The Lord's prayer has been in process of fulfillment ever since. The dead in Christ have entered on its answer now. There is no intermediate state. We know

that "Absent from the body means face to face with the Lord."

A Christian death is an answer to the Lord's prayer here. True, for Christians as for all, the physical necessity is an imperative law. True, the punitive aspect of death is retained for them. **But yet the law is wielded by Christ, and while death remains, its whole aspect is changed.** So we may think of those who have departed in His faith, and fear is gone in answer to the Lord's prayer. How beautiful that is. Slowly. One by one, they are gathered in, as the stars one by one light up. Place after place is filled.

Thus through the ages the Lord's prayer works out. And our dear ones have gone from us, but they have gone to Him. We weep, but they rejoice. To us their departure is the result of an iron law, of a penal necessity, of some secondary cause. But to them it is seen to be the answer to His mighty prayer. They hear His voice and follow Him when He says, "Come up thither."

THIRDLY, THE FINAL FULFILLMENT, STILL FUTURE. The Lord's prayer looks forward to a perfect fulfillment. His prayer cannot be in vain.

A. PERFECT IN DEGREE.

B. PERFECT IN EXTENT.

When all shall be gathered together and the "whole family" shall be in Heaven and Christ's own Word receives its crowning realization, that "of all whom the Father hath given Him He has lost nothing."

These are not some handful picked out by a decree which we can neither fathom nor alter, **but Christ is given to us all, and if we choose to take Him, then for us He has ascended.** And as we watch Him going up, the voice comes to us, "I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto Myself. that where I am, there ye may be also."