

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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THAT THEY MAY BE ONE

These things speaks Jesus, and lifting His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, come has the hour. Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son should be glorifying Thee, according as Thou givest Him authority over all flesh, that everything which Thou hast given to Him, He should be giving it to them, even life eonian. Now it is eonian life that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou dost commission, Jesus Christ.” (John 17.1-3 CV)

As He was about to be betrayed into the hands of those who would lead Him to death on a cross, Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven and prayed to His heavenly Father. The hour had come for the Son of God to glorify His Father. The passion of His heart was for all who are given to Him to come into eonian life, that is, life in the coming eons, and, in that life, to know the only true God, the one who sent Him to this earth to redeem mankind. Jesus, the Son of God, was the heavenly ambassador sent to mankind to reveal the very heart and nature of the one true God. We know the Father of all through the Son who is the exact image of the invisible God.

Many call Jesus' prayer of John 17 the high priestly prayer, for He interceded(s) on behalf of all those who were given to Him by His Father. There is much that is contained in His prayer, but for this issue, I want to concentrate on a phrase that He prayed three times—***that they may be one***.

“I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.” ... “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” (John 17.11, 20-23 NASB)

To be sure, much of what Jesus prayed was directed toward those given to Him by the Father and who had walked with Him. However, as revealed in verse 20, by inference, all who believe in Jesus through the words of the apostles are also included in this prayer. What was the heart of Jesus' prayer? **That they (all of us who believe) may all be one!** But in what way are all to be one? They are to be one as the Father and the Son are one—**that they may be one as We are one**.

Earlier, Philip had inquired of Jesus: **“Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”** But Jesus responded: **“He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?”** The Son did nothing apart from His Father, for Jesus said: **“The Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.”** See John 14.8-11.

How was Jesus one with His Father as He walked this earth? God is spirit. He was one in spirit with His Father and, as such, He was not of the realm of the world. He walked in the realm of His Father, and in one spirit, He was of one heart and one mind with His Father, which led Him to do only that

which His Father was doing and speaking. This is oneness or unity of the spirit, which is life in God, and this life for us who believe comes from our life being hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3.3). It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me (Galatians 2.20). It is Christ who is our life (Colossians 3.4). Paul declared that to live is Christ (Philippians 1.21). We have been chosen in Him and sealed in Him (Ephesians 1.4, 13) so that Christ is in us and we are in Him. These are not just objective truths but the reality for those who belong to Christ. Do you think for a minute that the Father ignored the cry of the heart of His Son? Do you think for a minute that this prayer will go unanswered? Of course not; Jesus, who was one with His Father in all things, was praying the very heart of God for the first disciples, as well as for all who would believe after them.

Of all the apostles, I believe that Paul was foremost in capturing the heart of the Lord and seeing the answer to this high priestly prayer. It is with this in mind that he wrote the Ephesians epistle imploring the saints **to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in the love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit** (Ephesians 4.1-4a NASB).

You see, many of the problems that we encounter with one another in the body of Christ are the result of failing to see that all who believe are in Christ and Christ is in them, and that it is on the basis of our unity in the Spirit and our oneness in Christ that we are to live in this day, loving one another and those in the world. Our life is hidden with Christ in God, and we are to live in this life, which is one life. There is no division in Christ, and there is no identity crisis in Christ. What I mean by this last point is that so many believers see their Christian identity based on many things other than Christ. It could be a particular emphasis, a set of doctrines, the teaching of a gifted man, or the gifted teacher himself, and the list could go on almost indefinitely.

T. Austin-Sparks said: “By nature we have no life in God. We are separated from God. We have no ability to save ourselves. We have no power to understand Divine things, and we are children of wrath, but the Lord Jesus took all that on Himself. You see, our life as the Lord’s born again children is supposed to be a life in God, not just walking alongside of God, but living in God. Do not make any man, no matter how wonderful he is, how great a preacher or a teacher he is, do not make him your life. Seek to have your life in God, not in things, not in people, not in places, not in circumstances, not in arguments, not in human intelligence, but in God.”

Paul challenged the Corinthians who had divided Christ. **Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?** (2 Corinthians 13.5 NASB).

Again, consider the heart of Jesus’ prayer to His Father: **That they may be one even as We are; that they also may be in Us; that they may be perfected in unity.** Have you grasped the magnitude of what Jesus prayed? He prayed that we would be one as the Father and the Son are one and that we may be in Them. This is astonishing. In Christ, we have been brought into the very life of God in which there is no division, only unity. There is no identity crisis; there is no rivalry; there is no jealousy; there is no sectarianism; there is no argument; there is no deceit; there is no competition. There is only oneness of heart and of mind, and out from this oneness comes one work based on one love, the very love of God who is love.

Do you realize that the way to perfection in Christ is through the unity of the Spirit? This is what Jesus meant when He stated that they may be perfected in unity. It is by living in unity that we are perfected. It is in unity of Spirit that the body of Christ builds up itself in love (Ephesians 4.16), and it is for this reason that Paul implored the saints, and us today, to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Sadly, we do not see as much of this as we should in our day. We see more division than unity. But let us not lose heart. The Lord’s Prayer will be fully answered in the eons to come as His body, His complement, is glorified as He is glorified. Then, truly there will be oneness.