

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Jesus' Prayer For His Disciples

by Dan Trygg

"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; ¹⁰ and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ "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. ¹² While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." John 17:9-19

"*I ask on their behalf...*" (vs. 9) -- From verses 6-8, **this would refer to the disciples**, especially the eleven who are with Him. "*...not on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me...*"-- The Greek does not really say, "on their behalf", but "concerning" or "about" them, ...just a way of narrowing the scope of His interest. The phrase "You have given" does not have to imply that they are unthinking possessions to be traded back and forth. The word for "give" can also mean "entrust", as to "give into someone's care". "*...for they are Yours.*" -- The Greek does not use the normal construction that would be used to express possession. Instead of saying, "*of You*" or "*Yours*", Jesus actually said, "because they are to/in/with You". This language expresses that the disciples already had some attachment to, or interest in, God the Father that eventually directed them to be open to following Jesus. **These were men who were already interested in the things of God before they met Jesus** (e.g., Jn. 1:35-51).

"*...and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine...*" (vs. 10) -- **First, this statement expresses complete openness and shared commonality in the relationship between Jesus and the Father.** The phrase, "everything I have is yours" may be spoken by a host to his guest, ...though possibly the offer is not to be taken literally in that case. It is a way to express an open heart and an open home, a way of dedicating oneself and one's worldly goods to the needs and interests of the other person. If we have called Jesus our Lord, then we have implied a similar commitment. **Secondly, Jesus' statement was based upon either the Father's open-hearted offer to Him, or upon the fact that the Father's things really were His, or both.** Using our example of having a guest in your home, to move beyond your personal declaration of openness and commitment your guest, to *claim* a reciprocal response from him is not possible (In fact, it would be offensively inappropriate!), ...*unless* he had already made such an offer to you, ...or unless you had some legal basis to your claim. You don't just say, "*Your stuff belongs to me.*" **Third, in the context, Jesus is not presuming upon some imagined level of trust**, ...nor "hyping" Himself up into some kind of "faith mind-set", where He appropriates the things of God with "the eye of faith". **He is simply, calmly stating a fact that was true about His relationship to the Father and His "things".** "*...and I have been glorified in them.*" -- This is a reference to the disciples. In spite of the lack of understanding, and imperfections, they *had* magnified Jesus.

"*And I am no more in the world...*" (vs. 11) -- Obviously speaking of His soon departure as though it were already an established fact. "*...and they themselves are in the world, and I come to You.*" -- **Jesus is leaving them behind.** *His concern is that they will be left without His oversight and care.* "*Holy Father, keep them in Your name which You have given Me...*" -- Probably a reference to the fact that His name literally meant "Yahweh's salvation", or "Yahweh saves". The word translated "keep" can also mean "guard, maintain, or keep firm". "*...in order that they might be one, even as We are.*" -- This introduces an interesting concept that continues to pop up throughout the prayer, i.e., the concept of oneness among the followers of Jesus. The word for "one" is in a form meaning "one thing". **This signifies more than just being united in purpose or thought.** Somehow *they* are to be one thing, "according as", or "in a similar way as", *Jesus and the Father* are one thing. **This would seem to be referring to a shared life, or essence.** Cf. Jn. 10:30. The verb, "they might be" signifies a possibility that has not yet taken place, while "in order that" indicates a purpose clause. Somehow it seems that the Father's "keeping them", or "maintaining them", in the name (or person) of Jesus is intended to make it possible for them to experience this "one-thing-ness", which they do not presently possess. **Could this be a reference to the coming Holy Spirit?** He currently was "with them", but Jesus had said He would come to dwell "in them"? (Jn. 14:17)

"*While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me...*" (vs. 12) -- The form of the verb "was" indicates ongoing action in the past, in this case, "I was being with them". This is also true for "I

was keeping them”. Jesus *had been doing* what He *now asks the Father to do*. “...and I guarded them...” -- The form of this verb is different. It indicates past completed action. In other words, this job is *done* now. “...and not one... perished but the son of perdition...” -- We are used to thinking of this in terms of Judas having lost his salvation. It is interesting that both the words “perished” and “perdition” come from a common root which means “to be destroyed; to come to nothing, waste; to be made empty or void; to be lost, to stray”. **At the time Jesus is speaking, Judas was still very much alive.** Certainly, he had strayed, and had not fulfilled his potential, but his eternal destiny was not yet sealed. **He had not perished, yet, though he certainly was confused and “lost” from the group.** “...that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” -- E.g., Psa. 41:9; 109:4-8.

“**But now I come to You...**” (vs. 13) -- Again, He is very much aware of the brevity of His time left on earth. “...these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves.” -- This is the stated purpose of Jesus’ prayer, “in order that they might (the *possibility* might come to pass) have/possess My joy having been fulfilled (or, ‘having been filled-full at a point in time with ongoing effect’) in or among themselves”. This phrase has occurred twice before in the book, first in 3:29 of the Baptist’s joy over Jesus’ success, and then also in 15:11, where Jesus speaks of this full “Jesus-joy” being the result of abiding in Him and obeying the Father. Is He speaking of the joy of realizing that He is risen from the dead, or is He praying for something more than even *that*?

“**I have given them Your word...**” (vs. 14) -- The verb means that the message *had been transmitted* or *delivered to them* and they *still* have it. “...and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” -- Jesus had spoken of this before in 15:18-16:4.

“**I do not ask You to take them out of the world...**” (vs. 15) -- That would be a “quick fix” solution that many of us would opt for, if *we* had a say in things. This was not Jesus’ prayer, however. **The disciples of Jesus had a job to accomplish, as do we. We must remain here to fulfill our calling.** Some churches teach that we are to separate from the world, out of fear that we might be corrupted by its influences. While recognizing the danger of compromise (e.g., I Cor. 15:33; II Cor. 6:14-7:1), the clear expectation of the NT is that we must remain in some contact with sinful people (I Cor. 5:9-13) so that they can see our good works, our changed behavior and attitudes (Matt. 5:14-16; I Pet. 2:11,12). Undoubtedly this will, at times, expose us to the danger of persecution (II Tim. 3:12), but it is part of the reality we must deal with. “...but to keep them from the evil one.” -- Satan and his forces are behind much of the hatred and lashing out against Christians (Eph. 2:2). It is part of a spiritual onslaught that we must learn to resist and overcome (Eph. 6:10-18; Rev. 12:7-12). Jesus’ petition here is virtually the same as He taught the disciples to pray in what we call the Lord’s Prayer, i.e., “...deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13). **Satan is a fearsome adversary from whom we need the Lord’s continual protection** (I Pet. 5:8). Without it, he would quickly destroy us.

Vs. 16 is a statement concerning their basic identity and orientation. **Like Jesus, we are not of the world.**

“**Sanctify them in the truth...**” (vs. 17) -- To “sanctify” something means to set it apart from common use for a special or holy purpose. **Jesus asks the Father to set apart, consecrate, and dedicate the disciples for His purposes.** The preposition “in” could also be translated as “by”, or “with”. Thus **they are to be set apart by truth, by a new perception of, and identification with, what is reality.** “*Your word is truth.*” -- One distinction needs to be made here that does not come out in English very well. In the first phrase, Jesus asked the Father to set them apart by “the truth”, a big picture including all that is real and genuine. In this second phrase, however, Jesus does not refer to the word as “*the truth*”, but simply as “truth”. What this means is that **God’s word is a sound, trustworthy source for understanding at least a portion of what is the total “reality”, but it is not equal to all that is “real” or “true”.** We need to be aware of this distinction so as to not have unrealistic expectations, or become too narrow minded. **All that is true is not in the Scriptures, ...but what is there is true and dependable.**

“**As you did send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.**” (vs. 18) -- In a manner that is *like* or *comparable* to Jesus’ commissioning by the Father to reveal the truth of God, He has now commissioned His apostles. **The implication would be that they also are equipped in a similar way as He had been, and would follow a similar methodology.**

“**And for their sakes I sanctify Myself...**” (vs. 19) -- The verb tense here is present, ongoing action, “I am sanctifying, consecrating, dedicating Myself”. Jesus clearly was devoting His life on their behalf. “...that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.” -- Another purpose clause in the Greek. **Jesus’ dedication of His life, ...to die on their behalf..., was for the purpose of enabling them to be set apart for God.** Jesus’ death would make possible something that *did not at that time exist*, so there must have been more to this than simply the apostles’ intentions to serve God. Moreover, the Greek actually uses *two verbs*, “they might be (in an ongoing fashion)” and “having been sanctified (i.e., sanctified at a point in time with ongoing result)”. **Jesus’ death and resurrection would allow a new cleansing and dedication that could remain in effect indefinitely.** This is an important distinction to grasp: Jesus did not just die to save us; He died to *dedicate* us. He laid His life down, so we would be freed to do the same: to live for God.