

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Prayer For Future Believers

by Dan Trygg

“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ 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. ²² The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ 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. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; ²⁶ and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” John 17:20-26

“*I do not ask on behalf of these alone...*” (vs. 20) -- Jesus expands the focus of His prayer. “*...but for those who believe in Me through their word...*” -- The NASB translation here sounds like a shift *away from* His current disciples to future believers. Actually the Greek is *inclusive*, “rather also concerning the ones believing by means of their word into/unto Me”. **Jesus’ thoughts do not move away from the apostles, but reaches beyond them to include the fruits of their ministry.**

“*...that they may all be one...*” (vs. 21) -- This is a purpose clause in Greek. “I am asking... *in order that* they might be one [thing]”. As we saw in vs. 11, **Jesus is praying for their essential unity, not just an organizational unity.** The verb form indicates a future possibility (i.e., something that did not *as yet* exist, but would come to pass) that would be ongoing, “they might be (being)”.

Sometimes it is interesting to think about what He didn't say, in order to understand more clearly the meaning of the word construction that He *did* choose to employ. Just by changing the form of the verb, **He could have communicated the idea that they might come to be “one [thing]” at a point in time.** The emphasis would have been on them coming to be “one (thing)” at that future possible moment. Or, **He could have used another form that would indicate that He wanted the Father to make them “one” at a future possible moment and that they would remain “one” from that moment on.** He did not choose to express His thought in either of these ways. Rather, **He chose to say, “that they might be (being) one [thing]”.** The difference seems to be that **Jesus is praying that they will choose to continue in the state of being one.** This may possibly imply that they are to live out, or habitually express, this essential “oneness” that Jesus is talking about. The essential “oneness” is a given state, a starting point, that they are to continue to experience in an ongoing fashion, according to Jesus’ prayer. **The opposite of His request would be for them stop being “one”, i.e., they would come to be more than one essential thing, ...to somehow become fractured, mixed, or “other than” the one [thing] of Jesus’ prayer.** In other words, we could selfishly choose to *not* continue in this oneness. It would seem that this has been the norm throughout most of church history

“*...even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You...*” -- A comparative word picture that helps us to understand what He is talking about. The language of “You in Me, and I in You” sounds like He is talking about some kind of “shared life”, doesn’t it? This is “*essential oneness*”, not just “teamwork” or “agreement”. **The way that Jesus and the Father experienced oneness was similar to how He prays that we might “be (being) one”.** How can *we* be “*in one another*” like *they* are? Cf. Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor. 12:26,27. “*...that they also might be in Us...*” -- In English, this sounds like it is to be the completion of the previous phrase. In the Greek, it is a separate purpose clause, alongside of the first one in this verse. **Their becoming one-thing is in order that they might also be in the Father and Jesus.** “*...that the world may believe that You did send Me.*” -- A *third* purpose clause. In other words, “I ask... (1.) *in order that* [they] all might be one [thing], just as You are in Me, and I in You; (2.) *in order that* also they might be being in Us; and (3.) *in order that* the world might believe that You sent Me (at a point in time). The exact relation of these ideas to one another is not obviously clear. Are they three separate unrelated ideas, just listed next to each other? Are they meant to be fully progressive in nature, moving from one to another? How do they overlap or relate to each other? If they do, **how does our (1.) being one [thing] (with intermingled life and identity in relationship to one another, like that of Jesus' own relation to the Father), and (2.) sharing intermingled life and identity with Jesus and the Father, relate to (3.) the world believing that God did send Jesus?** The Lord does not expand on what He may have had in His mind. It is for *us* to ponder.

“*And the glory which You have given Me I have given them...*” (vs. 22) -- **What “glory” is He talking about?** In 1:14, we were told that the incarnate Word had glory, glory like a unique son of a father might have, **a glory full of**

grace and truth. This glory, or radiance, *made visible* the *character* of the *invisible* God -- 1:18; 2:11; 7:16-18; 11:4,40. Cf. I Pet. 4:14. The verb, "I have given" communicates the idea that Jesus *had given* them this glory and it *remains* theirs. It may refer to His *intent*, however, not necessarily to what *has happened* in fact, yet, ...since those who will believe through the preaching of the apostles (vs. 19) do not as yet exist as believers. "...*that they may be one, just as We are one...*" -- Another purpose clause. **Jesus had transferred the glory which He had to them... in order to bring about this "one-thing-ness" among His followers**, a "one-thing-ness" like Jesus and the Father experienced.

"...*I in them, and You in Me...*" (vs. 23) -- **What would it mean for Jesus to be in them?** Looking back, **we can see this fulfilled by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.** Rom. 8:9,10,15; Gal. 4:6; Matt. 28:18-20. What about the Father being in Jesus? Cf. Jn. 14:7-10. "...*that they may be perfected in unity...*" -- Another purpose clause. **Jesus' and the Father's indwelling are to bring about the goal of "one-thing-ness"**. The verb, translated as "they may be perfected", is a combination of the verb "to be" (lit., "they might be [being]") with a participle that communicates an ongoing completed state, "having been perfected/matured/fully grown/completed/brought to fulfillment". This participle obviously implies some kind of a process that is brought to an end or fulfillment. The phrase "in unity" uses a different preposition, meaning "into, unto, towards", but the noun is the same, "one (thing)". Thus, **it would be better translated, "...in order that they might be having been completed/fully grown into one (thing)"**. "...*that the world may know that You did send Me, and did love them, even as You did love Me.*" -- Yet another purpose clause. **The end-purpose of this process of building this "one-thing-ness" He had been praying for, is that the world might then experientially-know the reality of Christ's claims and the veracity of the gospel message of God's love.** Evidently, whatever this "one-thing-ness" might be, it ought to be *visible enough* that unbelievers will not only be able to *see* it, ...but that they would also *be amazed enough* by what they see to conclude that Jesus must have been the Son of God, sent from heaven to save humankind. **This will verify God's love (agapē) not only for Jesus, but also for the human race.**

"*Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am...*" (vs. 24) -- There is a shift back to focus on the eleven disciples, "whom You have given to Me" (vs. 9). The "I desire" is followed by a purpose clause in Greek, "in order that where I am, also these might be with Me". "...*that they may behold My glory...*" -- Another purpose clause. They might be *with Me* "in order that they might see My glory". The word for glory is the same throughout the chapter. "...*which You have given Me...*" -- The verb implies a glory granted and remaining in His possession. Evidently the disciples will not be able to see it fully in this life. Cf. Phil. 2:5-11; Ex. 33:17-23. "...*for you did love Me before the foundation of the world.*" -- Jesus had existed, and been in relationship with the Father, before the world was created.

"*O righteous Father...*" (vs. 25) -- God is just, equitable, fair, righteous in character and in His dealings with men. "...*although the world has not known You...*" -- "Although" is the NASB translators' choice for the word usually rendered as "and, also, or even". The world did not experientially or relationally know God. "...*yet I have known You...*" -- **Jesus did have that experiential relationship with God, the basis of His works and words among us.** Cf. Jn. 5:19,20,30; 8:54,55. "...*and these have known that You did send Me.*" -- 16:30-31; 17:7,8.

"...*and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known...*" (vs. 26) -- Jesus had revealed to them the meaning of His name, Y'shua, the name which He said was the Father's and had also been given to Jesus (vs. 11). "Y'shua", the Hebrew form for "Jesus", means "Yahweh saves". **Jesus had shown them the Father's heart** to do just that, **and will even more fully make it evident to them by the events of His death, resurrection, and by the ongoing teaching ministry of His Spirit.** "...*that the love wherewith you did love Me may be in them, and I in them.*" -- A final purpose clause in this high priestly prayer. **The purpose of the revelation of the Father's heart and character will be to bring about the possibility that the love of God might dwell inside the disciples** (Rom. 5:5; I Jn. 4:7-21), **and that Jesus Himself might dwell in them.**

It seems that this "shared life" or "essential oneness" is from the Holy Spirit. He is called the Spirit of glory in I Peter 4:14, ...and in II Corinthians 3:18, Paul says we are being transformed from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father could be "in" Jesus, and "in" us. **His indwelling presence provides the basis for our essential unity.** **Jesus still prayed that we might be matured into unity, because the unity of the Spirit is only real and visible as we are abiding in Him.** **We can have the basis for unity dwelling within us, but not experience it, because we choose to not follow the Spirit's leading.** Because of the Spirit in us, we are also members of one another in the spiritual body, the church. You are part of me, and I am part of you, as fellow members of the Body of Christ. **What Jesus was praying for is that we would come to a full and mature expression of that unity in the Spirit.** **When we are abiding in Christ, filled with the Spirit,** and have put aside our earthly differences in favor of our spiritual oneness, **it will become visible in our love and solidarity for and with one another.** We are bound together by Life, the Life of God. **The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit.** **When our walk shows that unity and love, people will know that Jesus was sent from God, and that we are His followers** (Jn. 13:34,35).