

The Prayer of Our High Priest: Father, I Want My Whole Family to Be There With Me

by T. Austin-Sparks

The Lord's Prayer in John 17 is a model for believers to follow in their own prayer lives, emphasizing the importance of consecration, separation from the world, and protection from the evil one.

Scripture: John 17:1

Topics: "Consecration", "Intercession"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of Jesus' prayer in John 17, which he identifies as the true Lord's Prayer, contrasting it with the prayer given to the disciples. He explains that Jesus, as the High Priest, consecrates Himself for the sake of His family, teaching that true prayer requires total surrender to God. Sparks highlights three aspects of consecration: separation from personal will, detachment from worldly influences, and protection from evil. He underscores the importance of Jesus' intercession for His followers, expressing His desire for them to be with Him and to behold His glory. The sermon calls believers to pray with the same heart and purpose as Christ, seeking unity among His followers.

Transcript

Read: John seventeen.

There is another prayer in the New Testament which the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples. That prayer is usually called the Lord's prayer. You remember that prayer, that it begins: "Our Father Which art in Heaven." But that prayer was not the Lord's prayer. That prayer never could be the Lord's prayer. He gave it to the disciples just to indicate lines along which they could pray. It is a mistake to call it the Lord's prayer. The Lord Jesus could never say to the Father, "Forgive us our trespasses." He never had to ask for forgiveness. That would have made Him a sinner. And in Him, there was no sin. The true Lord's Prayer is the one that we have just read. John seventeen is truly the Lord's prayer. Here, we can learn much from His prayer as to how we should pray. So we will follow Him through this prayer.

I expect most of you know that this prayer has been called 'the high priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus.' And I think that is the right name for it, because in this prayer the Lord Jesus is following the course of the high priest of old. The high priest of old prepared himself to pass through into the most holy place, and there meet God. He took the blood from the altar. He took the fire from the altar. He took a censer and put the fire into it, and then he put the sweet incense on the fire into the censer, and passed from the outer court

through the holy place and through the veil into the most holy place. And there he swung his censer before the mercy seat, having sprinkled the blood upon the mercy seat, and there rose unto God a cloud of sweet incense: - something acceptable and well pleasing to God, a savor of Christ.

Now you will see by the position of John seventeen, that Jesus is just beginning that course. He is about to go to the great Altar of sacrifice - the Cross. He is about to take His Own blood from the Cross. He is about to take the fire of judgment from the Cross. And He is about to pass through the veil. We are told that the veil is His flesh. His body is about to be rent from top to bottom like the veil of the most holy place. And His body, having been broken, He is about, in the spirit, to enter into the Presence of the Father. HE IS NOW GOING THROUGH, IN SPIRIT, TO THAT HEAVENLY HOLY OF HOLIES WHERE GOD IS. And there in the Presence of God He will sprinkle the blood of testimony. And in the Presence of God He will present the sweet savor of a perfected work, well pleasing to God. And all that is gathered into this prayer. As this High Priest, our Lord Jesus is moving toward the heavenly sanctuary, He is praying, and He is praying for the people who are represented by Him. He is praying for the family that He is leaving outside.

You notice this is a family matter. He begins His prayer with the word, "Father," and He ends the prayer with "Thy name." They are the things which make the family - The Father and His name. Now you notice how He prays for the family. As He moves toward the Father, He says, first of all, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself," on their behalf "I sanctify Myself." And if we want to know the meaning of the word, "sanctification," it is the same word as being made holy, same word as consecration. It just means being wholly set apart for God. For their sakes I wholly consecrate or set apart Myself unto God.

You must realize that that is the first basis of effectual prayer. If that is the basis of the prayer of the Lord Jesus, how much more ought it to be our basis of prayer. If He said, 'For their sakes I consecrate over to God everything, I Am wholly separated unto God. God has everything where I Am concerned.' That is His basis of prayer, and that is our basis of prayer. When we come to pray, or whenever we go to the Lord in prayer, I think the Holy Spirit would ask this question: Are you holding anything back? Are you keeping something back for yourself? Have you any personal interest? Or has the Lord got everything? Is it as true of you, as it was of your Lord, that everything is on the Altar? You have only one motive in life, and that is to be wholly for the Lord, ourselves for the Lord, our homes for the Lord, our business for the Lord, everything in life for the Lord. That is what the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "I consecrate Myself." That is the essential basis of effectual prayer. The Lord Jesus said this because He was setting an example for the family.

There are three directions and respects in this prayer in which the Lord Jesus wanted the family to be consecrated or separated. Firstly, what He meant by saying, "I sanctify Myself - Myself. I separate Myself from My Own will - separate from My Own interest." You see, the Lord Jesus had a human nature as well as a Divine nature, and all through that earthly life this question was arising for Him. Could He be tempted to take the life of His human nature, instead of the Divine. It was not a sinful human nature, but it was a human nature. You see, those temptations of the devil in the wilderness were just the temptation to get Him to come down onto the ordinary ground of human nature. And from the temptation immediately after His baptism right up to the Cross, that was the battle. In the garden of Gethsemane, the battle was this: "Not My will, but Thy will." His was not a sinful will, but it was a human will; and He had the power to choose. It was within His power to say, "No," and when it came to the Cross, that choice was a great battle. It was a terrible battle in the garden; between what He called, "My will, and Thy will."

Now, if that was true of the Lord Jesus, how much more true it is of us. If it was true of One Who had no sinful will, how much more true is it of us who have a sinful will. So He said, 'I consecrate Myself. I step away from what I am in My mere humanity over onto God's side. I leave My ground for God's ground.' You know, that is a part of true prayer. We shall never get through in prayer to God, if we are standing on our own natural ground. We have got to take God's ground, even if that means against ourselves and our own wills. So, He said, 'I consecrate Myself, I put My whole self onto this Altar of the Cross.' That is the way He prayed as He moved up to the Father.

Do you notice the second thing that consecration meant? Listen to Him praying for the family. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but Thou shouldst keep them." He knew that the world is one of the greatest powers against consecration. What a big force this world is to cause us to keep something back from the Lord. In this prayer, the Lord Jesus makes it perfectly clear that the world is an enemy to God. The world is an enemy to the spiritual life of God's people. The same man, John, who recorded this prayer, later on recorded this: He that is a friend of the world is an enemy of God. So that consecration is separation spiritually from this world while we remain in it. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world!" So consecration for Him and for us means that the world has no place in our hearts. And that again is a great principle of true prayer. I think that much prayer is defeated, and is a failure, because there is so much of the world in our lives.

And then the third thing that He said about consecration was this: "I pray that Thou will keep them from the evil one." That evil one is always very near, he is always trying to do his evil work, he is always trying to lead or to ensnare us into something that is of himself. He is always trying to tempt us. Jesus says, "I pray, Father, 'That Thou wilt keep them from the evil one.'" You know, when the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, the final chapter of that great letter brings us into this realm of conflict with the evil one and the evil powers. And he says that conflict is in prayer. He says, in effect, **THAT THE GREATEST BATTLE WITH THE FORCES OF EVIL IS THE PRAYER BATTLE.** We have got to get into a position of victory over the evil one in order to pray effectively. So that is the Lord's basis of prayer.

I have said it in a very few words. It needs very much more, but that is not the whole prayer. He breathes out His desire to the Father about this family, and He makes two requests of the Father: "I pray that where I Am, there they may be." Where He is going, we shall come. And where is He going? He said, I am going to the Father, and I want My whole family to be there with Me. And He has to pray that, because they will not be there unless He does pray. Our coming to the Father so much rests upon the prayer of our High Priest. That is one of the great inheritances of the Lord's family.

I do not know how it is with you, but very often I pour out my heart to the Lord in prayer, and when I have prayed all that I can pray, I have to add this: 'But Lord, it is not, after all, my prayer; it is the prayer of Your Son that is going to get me through.' He said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift thee as wheat: but I have prayed for thee." And He believed so much in His prayers, that He said, 'When you turn again, strengthen your brothers, because I have prayed for you' (Luke 22:31-33). Peter, you will come through it all. You will come out on the other side. And that is how it is with us now. "This High Priest ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). And we owe far more to His prayers for us than we realize.

And then the second part of that petition was this: "That they may behold My glory!" That is very beautiful. They have beheld My humiliation. They have seen Me despised and rejected of men. And they will share

that rejection themselves. They will know something of this humiliation which I know now. But Father, I want them to see the result of it all. I want them to see how all the rejection and the humiliation and the suffering will turn out in the end. I pray that they may behold My glory, and when they behold My glory, they will say, 'It was all worthwhile.' The suffering and the rejection were worthwhile.

So His prayer for us, done here, is going to have its glorious end in our beholding His glory. Now, as I said at the beginning, all this is a way of praying. I left a lot out from this prayer. He prayed for the family THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE. And surely that is something to pray about, perhaps more than ever in history today we need to pray about the Lord's people, THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE. Well, I just leave that brief meditation with you. Let us follow our High Priest through into the Presence of the Father, praying as He prayed.

"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" (John 17:21, 22).

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