Exploring the Bible—Gospel of John (18)

Life’s Prayer

**Scripture Reading:**

1 These things Jesus spoke, and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You; 2 Even as You have given Him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Him whom You have sent, Jesus Christ. 4 I have glorified You on earth, finishing the work which You have given Me to do. 5 And now, glorify Me along with Yourself, Father, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. 6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that all that You have given Me is from You, 8 For the words which You gave Me I have given to them, and they received them and knew truly that I came forth from You, and they have believed that You sent Me. 9 I ask concerning them; I do not ask concerning the world, but concerning those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours; 10 And all that is Mine is Yours, and Yours Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And I am no longer in the world; yet they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given to Me, that they may be one even as We are. 12 When I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given to Me, and I guarded them; and not one of them perished, except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world 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 that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them out of the hands of 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 have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. 20 And I do not ask concerning these only, but concerning those also who believe into Me through their word, 21 That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me. 22 And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one; 23 I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, concerning that which You have given Me, I desire that they also may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 Righteous Father, though the world has not known You, yet I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. 26 And I have made Your name known to them and will yet make it known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:1-26)

**Ministry Reading:**

The Lord’s prayer in John 17 unfolds three stages of oneness, let us pay careful attention to the verses in John 17 that are concerned with oneness.

ONENESS IN THE DIVINE LIFE

Verse 11 says, “Holy Father, keep them in Your name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.” We see here that oneness is a matter of being kept in the Father’s name. As we have already pointed out, the reality of the Father’s name is the Father’s divine life. Hence, the first factor of genuine oneness is the Father’s name with the Father’s divine life. This is the life mentioned in 17:2, where the Lord said to the Father that He had given the Son “authority over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him.” We must take care of these two verses in order to see the first main factor of genuine oneness.

ONENESS IN THE HOLY WORD

John 17:21 is a wonderful, deep, and profound verse. “That they all may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, that the world may believe that You have sent Me.” The oneness in this verse is the oneness in the Triune God. When we all are in the Triune God, we have oneness. How can we be in the Triune God? Only through Christ’s death and resurrection. This is the reason why the Lord told us in chapter fourteen that He had to go in death and come in resurrection. It was through death and resurrection that His disciples were brought into the Triune God. In the Triune God is the real, genuine oneness. We must take verses 17 and 18 along with verse 21. “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” In verse 17 we have the sanctifying word. Although we are in the Triune God, we may slip out of the Triune God into the world. Thus, we need the sanctifying word to separate us from the world back to the Triune God. Therefore, the second factor of genuine oneness is in the Triune God through sanctification by the holy word.

ONENESS IN THE DIVINE GLORY

The third factor of oneness is found in verse 22. “And the glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, even as We are one.” The third factor of genuine oneness is glory—in the divine glory for the expression of the Triune God. Since the glory which the Father has given to the Son has been given to us by the Son, genuine oneness is in the divine glory. What is glory? Glory is the sonship given to the Son by the Father with the Father’s divine life and nature to express the Father in His fullness. Notice that there are four aspects of glory: sonship, the Father’s life, the Father’s divine nature, and the expression of the Father in His fullness. These four things together equal the glory. This is the glory, which is a divine right and privilege, that we have in the Son. The Father has given this glory to the Son, and the Son is privileged to express the Father in this way. This is the very glory which has been given to us by the Son. Today we all have the sonship with the Father’s life and nature to express the Father in all His fullness in the Son. We need to become very familiar with these points, for it is in this divine glory that we are truly one.

**Life Applications:**

In order to have oneness, there must be the building up. Without the building up, there is no oneness. Do not think that a piling up of materials is oneness. No, that is not oneness. Consider a house. There is a genuine oneness among all the materials in the house, and that oneness is the building up. Every piece of material has been fitly framed together. This is oneness. The oneness that many Christians are talking about today is just a piling up. Sometimes, however, it is not even a piling up; it is a matter of one person who is far away from another, saying, “We are one.” Brother Watchman Nee describes this kind of oneness as shaking hands over the fence. But the oneness today often is not even a shaking hands over the fence, but a begging of people who are far away from one another. One on the east coast may plead with one on the west coast to be one with him, saying, “Dear brother, I am one with you.” The one on the west coast may reply, “Yes, I am one with you,” yet in his heart he says, “If we don’t keep a safe distance between us, we shall offend one another.”

If this is real oneness, where is the Body? The situation today is that the shoulder is afraid of the neck, wanting to keep a safe distance away from it. The eye is also afraid of the nose, saying, “Brother nose, you are too strong. I dare not stay with you. I want to be polite to you and nice to you, but I must keep a safe distance from you.” Such a situation is not oneness. The genuine oneness is the building up. Look at the oneness of your physical body: that oneness is a matter of being built up. We all must see that this building is what the Lord needs today. Two thousand years ago, the Lord said, “I come quickly” (Rev. 22:20). Two thousand years have passed, and still He has not come. Why? Because it is a shame for Him to come back without having a real building. There must be a small remnant which will respond to the Lord’s heart and be willing to lose their identification in order to be built up together as one. This will be a shame to the enemy. The enemy, Satan, hates this building. Thus, in John 17, the Lord prayed for it.

Question for Discussion: Consider what is the real oneness and building? And how do we advance on the experience of oneness and building?

Reference: Life-Study of John, Msg. 38-41