

## CHARACTER-LIKENESS TO THE LORD

**"I pray for them...that they may be one,...that they may be made perfect in one,...that the world may know that Thou hast...loved them as Thou hast loved Me." – John 17:9,20-23.**

THESE WORDS, we remember, were uttered by our Lord on the night of His betrayal, supposedly while on the way from the "upper room" where the Memorial was observed to the Garden of Gethsemane. The ones He evidently prayed for were the twelve Apostles, or rather the eleven, by this time; for in conjunction He says, "I have lost none of them, save the son of perdition." But the context shows that His prayer includes His faithful followers all the way down the Age. He says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for all those who shall believe on Me through their word." He prayed that His followers might be one, even as He and His Father were one – the same kind of oneness, a oneness of mind.

This text is one of the best proofs that the Lord Jesus and the Father are not one in person. He could not have prayed for all of the Church to be one in person. It is a oneness of will, a full harmony of will, a oneness of purpose. The Lord said, "Not My will, but Thine be done." He thus came into full oneness, harmony with the Father – with the Father's will, the Father's Plan. It is not a mutual concession, where each gives up some of his rights in order to become one.

His first work for dealing with the world of mankind – before He would become the world's Savior and the Mediator of the New Covenant – was the election of the Church. This was the work which He had now begun, and He was committing to them the testimony. He desires that all the Church have a oneness of purpose, a oneness of will with His will. And we can see that this could be obtained

only in the one way – by fully surrendering our will. And this, the Scriptures declare, is done by becoming dead.

## **TWO CAUSES OF DISSENSION**

A man or woman is merely what his will is and what that will can make out of the body and its circumstances. And so at the very beginning of our discipleship, the first thing is to see that we are dead as respects our will, and alive toward the Lord Jesus Christ. All who do this He calls New Creatures. He grants them the Holy Spirit, that the new mind, the new will, may be theirs. In proportion as they obtain the new mind, the new will, in that same proportion will the oneness with one another exist.

That which causes dissension amongst the Lord's people is either a lack of loyalty or a lack of knowledge. If it is a lack of loyalty, they will gradually drift away. The Lord does not choose to force any of His family. He is choosing such as worship Him in spirit and in truth, such as are in every respect loyal. He has set aside for the purpose of selecting this class the entire Gospel Age. This work of selecting has been in progress for nearly nineteen centuries. And this company will be a Little Flock. They will, evidently, be a very select class. They are required to walk by faith, not by sight.

Not many have the loyalty to God and to righteousness to walk that way and to count the world as loss and dross – as nothing, with all its projects. As the disloyal ones leave the ranks, more and more the loyal ones will find themselves drawn together, and more and more of oneness will be found among those who are faithful. This would necessarily be true in every time and in every country. All who are thoroughly loyal would desire to do the Father's will, desire to lay down their lives in the Father's service. And this desire would make them *one*.

## **FRICION MINIMIZED WITH MATURITY**

The Lord speaks of their being perfected in one. As each individual member makes progress, he becomes more worthy to fill the place or use the opportunity provided for him. And thus the Body becomes more efficacious. But the thought that our Lord here expresses is rather that of *completeness*. He is referring to the end of the Age, when the work will be completed, perfected, when they will all be one. But the grand consummation will be effected by something which the Lord will Himself do. [R5359 : page 359] We find that, necessarily, because of the differences of our flesh, we cannot in everything see exactly alike. Now we can only see more or less obscurely.

At present we cannot see fully and completely. Consequently there will always be more or less friction, even amongst those who are fully consecrated to do the Father's will. This friction should become minimized, as we become mature. But we cannot see eye to eye until the glorious consummation, when we shall have experienced the resurrection change, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." We are to have our trial in these imperfect bodies. And those who show their loyalty in fighting against the world, the flesh and the Adversary, to the end, will be joint-heirs with Christ, sharers in His Kingdom, executors of the Divine Program for the blessing of the world of mankind.

## **AN ASTOUNDING STATEMENT**

At the *Epiphania*, or bright shining, of the Lord's manifestation, God will have completed His present work of directing the Church, and the world will be informed that they are under a different Dispensation. When the world shall have come to understand the matter fully, they will know the truth of our Lord's words, in His last prayer with His disciples, that the Father loves the Church as He loves the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a very astounding

statement. It shows that there is nothing selfish in our Lord. He did not say, "They will always be inferior to Me. They will never have the glory that I shall have."

On the contrary, the Lord Jesus knows that the Heavenly Father will exercise His Love along the lines of principle, character. And all who will be members of the same glorious company must have the same glorious character that our Lord had; that is to say, they must be *loyal to the core*. They must have demonstrated that they loved righteousness and hated iniquity. We read, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." (Hebrews 1:9.) So He was anointed to be the Head of the Church class. But the Church class are declared in this Scripture to be His associates – not of inferiority, but of common fellowship, being on one plane. And the world will then know that the Father loved the Church as He loved Jesus. We understand that the Church will be on the same *plane* with her Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, we are to keep in mind that God "made Him to be Head over all – God blessed forever!" The Church will never be on an equality of position with Christ.

This is very wonderful to us, that our Heavenly Father should love us as He loved Christ, that the Lord would love the jewel, in the mire or wherever it might be found! The Lord Jesus has been selecting these characters out of the mire of human sin. And those who prove to be of the "more than conqueror" class – loyal as **[R5359 : page 360]** the Lord Jesus was loyal – the Father will love as He loved the Lord Jesus, and will glorify them with His Son.

"When thou passest through the waters,  
I will be with thee!  
Sure and sweet and all-sufficient  
Shall His presence be.  
All God's billows *overflowed Him*

In th' great Atoning Day;  
Now He only *leads thee through them* –  
With thee all the way."

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