

Twenty-Seventh Lesson. 'Father, I Will;' Or, Christ the High Priest

by Andrew Murray

Jesus' high-priestly prayer teaches believers how to pray in the name of Jesus, have confidence in their prayers, and prevail with God for the blessing of heaven on all surroundings on earth.

Scripture: John 15:5, John 17:24, Romans 8:26-27, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6-7, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Hebrews 4:14-16, James 5:16, 1 John 5:14-15

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "Intercessory Prayer"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the significance of Jesus' high-priestly prayer in John 17, where Christ intercedes for Himself, His disciples, and all believers. He teaches that true prayer in Jesus' name is rooted in unity with Him and seeks to glorify the Father. Murray encourages believers to embrace their calling as intercessors, praying specifically for their circles and the unity of the Church. He highlights the power of prayer when aligned with Christ's will and the importance of losing one's own will to find strength in God's purpose. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper understanding and practice of intercessory prayer as a vital aspect of the Christian life.

Transcript

'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me may be with me where I am.'--John xvii. 24.

IN His parting address, Jesus gives His disciples the full revelation of what the New Life was to be, when once the kingdom of God had come in power. In the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in union with Him the heavenly Vine, in their going forth to witness and to suffer for Him, they were to find their calling and their blessedness. In between His setting forth of their future new life, the Lord had repeatedly given the most unlimited promises as to the power their prayers might have. And now in closing, He Himself proceeds to pray. To let His disciples have the joy of knowing what His intercession for them in heaven as their High Priest will be, He gives this precious legacy of His prayer to the Father. He does this at the same time because they as priests are to share in His work of intercession, that they and we might know how to perform this holy work. In the teaching of our Lord on this last night, we have learned to understand that these astonishing prayer-promises have not been given in our own behalf, but in the interest of the Lord and His kingdom: it is from the Lord Himself alone that we can learn what the prayer in His Name is to be and to obtain. We have understood that to pray in His Name is to pray in perfect unity with Himself: the high-priestly prayer will teach all that the prayer in the Name of Jesus may ask and expect.

This prayer is ordinarily divided into three parts. Our Lord first prays for Himself (v. 1-5), then for His disciples (6-19), and last for all the believing people through all ages (20-26). The follower of Jesus, who gives himself to the work of intercession, and would fain try how much of blessing he can pray down upon his circle in the Name of Jesus, will in all humility let himself be led of the Spirit to study this wonderful prayer as one of the most important lessons of the school of prayer.

First of all, Jesus prays for Himself, for His being glorified, that so He may glorify the Father. 'Father! Glorify Thy Son. And now, Father, glorify me.' And He brings forward the grounds on which He thus prays. A holy covenant had been concluded between the Father and the Son in heaven. The Father had promised Him power over all flesh as the reward of His work: He had done the work, He had glorified the Father, and His one purpose is now still further to glorify Him. With the utmost boldness He asks that the Father may glorify Him, that He may now be and do for His people all He has undertaken.

Disciple of Jesus! here you have the first lesson in your work of priestly intercession, to be learned from the example of your great High Priest. To pray in the Name of Jesus is to pray in unity, in sympathy with Him. As the Son began His prayer by making clear His relation to the Father, pleading His work and obedience and His desire to see the Father glorified, do so too. Draw near and appear before the Father in Christ. Plead His finished work. Say that you are one with it, that you trust on it, live in it. Say that you too have given yourself to finish the work the Father has given you to do, and to live alone for His glory. And ask then confidently that the Son may be glorified in you. This is praying in the Name, in the very words, in the Spirit of Jesus, in union with Jesus Himself. Such prayer has power. If with Jesus you glorify the Father, the Father will glorify Jesus by doing what you ask in His Name. It is only when your own personal relation on this point, like Christ's, is clear with God, when you are glorifying Him, and seeking all for His glory, that like Christ, you will have power to intercede for those around you.

Our Lord next prays for the circle of His disciples. He speaks of them as those whom the Father has given Him. Their chief mark is that they have received Christ's word. He says of them that He now sends them into the world in His place, just as the Father had sent Himself. And He asks two things for them: that the Father keep them from the evil one, and sanctify them through His Word, because He sanctifies Himself for them.

Just like the Lord, each believing intercessor has his own immediate circle for whom he first prays. Parents have their children, teachers their pupils, pastors their flocks, all workers their special charge, all believers those whose care lies upon their hearts. It is of great consequence that intercession should be personal, pointed, and definite. And then our first prayer must always be that they may receive the word. But this prayer will not avail unless with our Lord we say, 'I have given them Thy word:' it is this gives us liberty and power in intercession for souls. Not only pray for them, but speak to them. And when they have received the word, let us pray much for their being kept from the evil one, for their being sanctified through that word. Instead of being hopeless or judging or giving up those who fall, let us pray for our circle, 'Father! Keep them in Thy Name;' 'Sanctify them through Thy truth.' Prayer in the Name of Jesus availeth much: 'What ye will shall be done unto you.'

And then follows our Lord's prayer for a still wider circle. 'I pray not only for these, but for them who through their word shall believe.' His priestly heart enlarges itself to embrace all places and all time, and He prays that all who belong to Him may everywhere be one, as God's proof to the world of the divinity of His mission, and then that they may ever be with Him in His glory. Until then 'that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.'

The disciple of Jesus, who has first in his own circle proved the power of prayer, cannot confine himself within its limits: he prays for the Church universal and its different branches. He prays specially for the unity of the Spirit and of love. He prays for its being one in Christ, as a witness to the world that Christ, who hath wrought such a wonder as to make love triumph over selfishness and separation, is indeed the Son of God sent from heaven. Every believer ought to pray much that the unity of the Church, not in external organizations, but in spirit and in truth, may be made manifest.

So much for the matter of the prayer. Now for its mode. Jesus says, 'FATHER! I WILL.' On the ground of His right as Son, and the Father's promise to Him, and His finished work, He might do so. The Father had said to Him, 'Ask of me, and I will give Thee.' He simply availed Himself of the Father's promise. Jesus has given us a like promise: 'Whatsoever ye will shall be done unto you.' He asks me in His Name to say what I will. Abiding in Him, in a living union with Him in which man is nothing and Christ all, the believer has the liberty to take up that word of His High Priest and, in answer to the question 'What wilt thou?' to say, 'FATHER! I WILL all that Thou hast promised.' This is nothing but true faith; this is honouring God: to be assured that such confidence in saying what I will is indeed acceptable to Him. At first sight, our heart shrinks from the expression; we feel neither the liberty nor the power to speak thus. It is a word for which alone in the most entire abnegation of our will grace will be given, but for which grace will most assuredly be given to each one who loses his will in his Lord's. He that loseth his will shall find it; he that gives up his will entirely shall find it again renewed and strengthened with a Divine Strength. 'FATHER! I WILL:' this is the keynote of the everlasting, ever-active, all-prevailing intercession of our Lord in heaven. It is only in union with Him that our prayer avails; in union with Him it avails much. If we but abide in Him, living, and walking, and doing all things in His Name; if we but come and bring each separate petition, tested and touched by His Word and Spirit, and cast it into the mighty stream of intercession that goes up from Him, to be borne upward and presented before the Father;--we shall have the full confidence that we receive the petitions we ask: the 'Father! I will' will be breathed into us by the Spirit Himself. We shall lose ourselves in Him, and become nothing, to find that in our impotence we have power and prevail.

Disciples of Jesus! Called to be like your Lord in His priestly intercession, when, O when! Shall we awaken to the glory, passing all conception, of this our destiny to plead and prevail with God for perishing men? O when shall we shake off the sloth that clothes itself with the pretence of humility, and yield ourselves wholly to God's Spirit, that He may fill our wills with light and with power, to know, and to take, and to possess all that our God is waiting to give to a will that lays hold on Him.

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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O my Blessed High Priest! who am I that Thou shouldest thus invite me to share with Thee in Thy power of prevailing intercession! And why, O my Lord! am I so slow of heart to understand and believe and exercise this wonderful privilege to which Thou hast redeemed Thy people. O Lord! give Thy grace that this may increasingly be my unceasing life-work--in praying without ceasing to draw down the blessing of heaven on all my surroundings on earth.

Blessed Lord! I come now to accept this my calling. For this I would forsake all and follow Thee. Into Thy hands I would believingly yield my whole being: form, train, inspire me to be one of Thy prayer-legion, wrestlers who watch and strive in prayer, Israel's, God's princes, who have power and prevail. Take possession of my heart, and fill it with the one desire for the glory of God in the ingathering, and

sanctification, and union of those whom the Father hath given Thee. Take my mind and let this be my study and my wisdom, to know when prayer can bring a blessing. Take me wholly and fit me as a priest ever to stand before God and to bless in His Name.

Blessed Lord! Be it here, as through all the spiritual life: Thou all, I nothing. And be it here my experience too that he that has and seeks nothing for himself, receives all, even to the wonderful grace of sharing with Thee in Thine everlasting ministry of intercession. Amen

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