

*Our Lord's Confidence at the Throne of Grace (Jn. 17.25-26)*

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**<sup>25</sup> O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."**

Introduction

With our focus on John 17.25-26, let us back up for a minute to verse 24 where we have the petition of Jesus that we be "with Him where He is" (that was the title of our last communion message): He says: **Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.** After praying in this way for our glorification (that we arrive safely in glory *with Him*), Jesus turns His attention to the time between. This is the "meantime," the time between His comings, the time in which we live. What is His concern for us as we make our journey through the meantime? His goal is that we disciples then and now (the apostles as the church and the church they represent and serve), participate in the love that God bestowed on Him and that we may have His indwelling: **that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them** (v. 26b).

Now, in 17.25-26, we have come to the very last words of the Lord's high priestly prayer. Interestingly, this concluding part of the prayer is not prayer *per se*. At first, you might think it is because, well, it is conversation with the Father: **O righteous Father.** However, the point I am making is that these words do not give voice to a petition. In that sense, it is not prayer *per se* (it might be better to simply say that this section does give another petition). If it is not prayer (though part of the prayer) then what is it? Read the text again with me: **<sup>25</sup> O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."** Note the lack of petition. What is here? There is conversation with the Father that states some facts and there is a key word: knowledge (I know, these know, I made known, I will...make it known). Again, if this is not prayer *per se*, then what is it? It is an expression of our Lord's confidence, looking back, looking ahead, and especially looking up: He knows the righteous Father.

For communion remembering, we will gather our thoughts by means of this question: what do we learn about Christ from the confidence He expresses in the conclusion of His prayer? We learn about His covenantal obedience, His tender love, and His saving faithfulness.

1A. His covenantal obedience

His confidence arises from obedience. We can start here because Jesus speaks of His intimate relationship with the Father (**I know you**) as the sent one (**you ...sent me**) who did the work He was sent to do, the work of revealing the Father to the disciples, making Him known in the fullness of His being and attributes (**<sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name**).

His confidence has its roots in the pact of salvation (the *pactum salutis*): **Jesus ...lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup> since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (17.1-3).** He is sure that the Father will keep His part of the agreement, just as He has kept His part: **(John 17:4-5 <sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed).**

In the prayer as a whole, Jesus is a supplicant, an intercessor. As such, He is confident. His confidence comes to expression in His address to the *righteous* Father. Referencing the

righteousness of the Father indicates that He “can face the bar of righteousness and justice on our behalf, and be sure to come speed...expecting that in righteousness he could not be refused” (Hutcheson, *John* 371). His confidence in prayer makes the petitions of the prayer and the facts of the conclusion promises for us. In the conclusion (17.25-26), Jesus comments on His work, on His obedience in making the Father known to His covenant people in contrast to the ignorance of the world. His confidence is based on covenantal obedience and that is the promise of our salvation.

## 2A. His tender love

His confidence overflows in tenderness. Jesus states (and thus promises) that the Father’s love to Him will come to us through Him *because He will abide in us (that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them)*. His tenderness is such that He gives Himself to us along with giving us the love of the Father. The Father’s love comes to us through Him, but not as impersonal instrument. He is sure that we will receive the love of the Father by His indwelling. The love of God flows to us by means of the indwelling of Christ in us.

Because the Father loves our mediator (because He is the beloved Son: **you loved me before the foundation of the world**, 17.24b), He is therefore a storehouse of the Father’s love and a conduit of that love to us. It is His desire that we possess God’s love for Him; “that we possess it, and feel it, and dwell in it, and feed upon it” (Hutcheson 371). It is by abiding in Christ that we bask in the sun of God’s love; otherwise, we wander away into cloudy, dark, and dismal weather.

In this way, He opens the door to intimate fellowship. As the writer to the Hebrews puts it, He is our forerunner into the holy of holies (**Hebrews 6:20, Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf**) and He has opened a new and living way by His body and blood (**Hebrews 10:19-22, <sup>19</sup>Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith**).

Fellowship is a great theme for this world of aliens. In the fall, each man has become a threat to his neighbor as Cain became a mortal threat to Abel. Departing from God we lose our true humanity and become fragments of a “human” race in which we wonder what happened to human in human race? (What happened to family in human family?). Broken fellowship with God inescapably involves broken fellowship within the fallen race in Adam. However, the core of restoration and redemption is access to God in all His holiness. It includes access to the presence of God. We have that by the presence of Christ with us. He is present with us. He is ever present. He promised to be with us (the disciples then and now, the apostles as the church in nuclear form) to the end of the age (Mat. 28.20). When we gather together in public assembly, Christ is in our midst (Mat. 18.20). It is a sweet and awesome place to have Christ here with us within the doors. Therefore, through the work of our praying Savior, we have fellowship with the Father and Son (1 Jn. 1.3), the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13.14), and in turn, the communion of the saints (1 Jn. 1.6-7). These are the benefits that He grants to us liberally with tender love that flows from the well of His confidence.

## 3A. His saving faithfulness

His confidence informs His faithfulness for He not only states that He obeyed the Father by making Him known to His disciples, but He also says, **I will continue to make [your name] known** (17.26).

He is a teacher who knows His subject. He knows the Father. He makes it sure that we come to know God in a saving way (17.4, **to have eternal life**) and in a sanctifying way (17.17, **your word is truth, sanctify them by your word**). He insures that we grow in understanding the name of God.

That means that He works in us to teach us more and more about who God is in the fullness and glory of His being and attributes. Through Paul, we know that this means that the eyes of our hearts will be enlightened (Eph. 1.18).

He is a teacher who knows His pupils: He knows our struggles and needs; He knows us as His brothers and sisters in the family of the Father. Thus, He will not allow our imperfections, failures, and sins to deprive us of God's love and blessing (Amen!).

His faithfulness is our salvation. We are to be faithful not to gain salvation and sanctification but because we have both through the faithfulness of our Savior, Jesus Christ the risen Lord. He teaches in a way that His disciples in fact come to know; He teaches and they learn. Unmistakably, in the teaching/learning relationship, teaching can go on without learning. Jesus causes His disciples to know the Father; they are disciples indeed by His effectual work of teaching, making known, and revealing the Father. This is a saving and sanctifying work: to know God is to receive eternal life now on route to a certain glory to come.

Therefore, though, as I stated earlier, we may wander away into cloudy, dark, and dismal weather, we can only go so far. He puts a hedge around us and will only let us go so far before He extends His hand to take hold of us. The Psalmist expresses this point by a striking comparison with travel by the rays of the sun: **<sup>5</sup>You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. <sup>7</sup>Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! <sup>9</sup>If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, <sup>10</sup>even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me** (Ps. 139.5-10). In the end, what measure of learning we attain is the result of His sovereignty by His powerful and gracious giving and withholding. For His love conquers our ignorance.

His confidence informs His saving and sanctifying faithfulness. As said of the Father, so it can be said of Christ: He who promised is faithful.

What then shall we say to these things?

1) I need Him

I am in need because of my sins. Because of my sins, I need the body and blood of Christ that these elements of bread and the fruit of the vine represent. I need a high priest who is both the one who offers sacrifice for sin and who is the offering for sin. I need this high priest who continues His work in the power of an indestructible life by the resurrection. I need Jesus as my Savior. I need the one whose confidence arises from covenant obedience, whose confidence overflows in tender love, and whose confidence informs faithfulness to God and to us. Yes, I need Jesus in the fullness of His saving and sanctifying confidence. As a prayer, O Lord Jesus, I need you.

2) I own Him as my own

Of course, it is one step acknowledge your need. That is a doorstep to the storehouse of blessing. The next step is appropriation. By taking the elements to your lips and palate, you are claiming an interest in His body and blood. You symbolically appropriate His person, word, and work to your life. That is what you ought to do in your heart. You not only state that He is a great Savior to the needy. You also pray and say, "Lord, Jesus I own you as my Lord and Savior. I commit myself to you as my risen Lord. I commit myself to you as my prophet, priest, and king. Lord Jesus, I will learn from you, learn your law for obedience, and cling to you for forgiveness where I fail in obedience."

3) I own His family as my family

He intercedes in the prayer as a whole for us, and what is the key thing that He now states we most need for our journey in the time between until we arrive safely in glory? We need the love of the Father in us and we need Christ in us.

We must recognize that there is no truth to the claim that one can be a Christian and hate God's people. As John says, <sup>9</sup> **Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.** <sup>10</sup> **Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.** <sup>11</sup> **But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes** (1 Jn. 2.9-11). Therefore, He goes on to make it clear that true believers prove that they are Christians (prove their childship to God) by their love for their brothers and sisters, <sup>7</sup>**Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God** (1 Jn. 4.7).

Accordingly, because there is one loaf, Christ, and because we are joined to Him, then we are one. We lay claim to that fact in symbol by taking of these elements that put the gospel of Christ to our very lips as food and drink for true life in abundance.

So, this too becomes a prayer that ought to rise up from our hearts in all honesty in the holy of holies: "O Lord Jesus, I own your family of brothers and sisters as my family. I commit myself to be family to them. I commit myself to the special task of trying to figure out how to stir up love and good works in the mutuality of one anothering, wise, tender, and honest love."

In this frame of mind with our hearts turned toward and focused on Christ, let us take and eat of the gospel portrayed in these elements.