

Miscellanea Sacra II

1. **“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one”** (John 17:22). We think of salvation as having the forgiveness of sins. And yes, forgiveness of sin is absolutely necessary for anyone to be in God’s presence. But if that’s all that salvation means to us, we’re missing it! It’s union with Christ that’s central to and the very essence of salvation. Union with Christ is nothing less than a unity of being between Jesus and believers with the nature we hold in common, a resurrected glorified human nature. Let me explain this truth, because it’s vastly more than just precious. In the same way that the Father and the Son are related, so we believers are to be together, that is with each other and with Jesus. This is not merely a unity of purpose as many commentators allege (although it includes that), but it’s a unity of *being*. Jesus is a divine Person, but He also has a human nature, a resurrected and glorified human nature. And when we’re taken to heaven that’s what we’ll also have – a resurrected and glorified human nature. We don’t become God. No. But we are taken into the very presence of God to be forever with Him and enjoy the Godhead’s intimate fellowship, joy and love *because of our shared nature with the Son*. Jesus anticipated this wonderful truth: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, only a single seed; but if it dies it produces many seeds [i.e., much fruit]” (John 12:24). Fruit has exactly the same DNA as the seed that gave rise to it. The “seed,” here, is Jesus and by dying and being raised He generates many souls who are *of the same nature* as He is. Consider this too: We are the “bride” and “body” of Christ, the 2nd Adam, in the same sense that, in the Garden, *isha* [the woman] was the bride and body of *ish* [the man, Adam], having been derived from him and being one with him. (Sin, tragically, fractured that intended unity.) And by the way, the “deep sleep” necessary for the *isha* to come from the *ish* is proleptic of the death that Jesus had to suffer for a Body and Bride to be made from Him. Jesus came to transform human nature into something transcendent, something more wonderful, something entirely glorious. And we today, in this present existence, have the privilege and responsibility of expressing that new humanity, now, by our service to God and by our sanctification in the Spirit thru the Word of God.

2. **“No prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face . . . For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel”** (Deuteronomy 34:10,12). With this the Pentateuch ends, as if it’s a summary statement of those 5 books. The Pentateuch is really a biography of Moses. There’s more text in it about Moses than there is about the Nation of Israel. The Book of Genesis serves as a Prologue to the story of Moses that begins in Exodus. The Genesis narratives are loaded with literary and thematic parallels to both the Moses story and that of the Nation of Israel. Why is the Pentateuch’s Moses narrative so important? Because the story of Moses/the Nation of Israel is one of *failure*. There needs to be another Moses, a new and better Moses, and a new and better Exodus. Jesus is that better than Moses, and the rescue from the grip of Satan he offers is vastly and more wonderfully superior to what Moses obtained from Pharaoh. We have the privilege of entering that new and better Exodus, but that enjoins on us the same responsibility that Moses laid on Israel: to be “a holy nation and kingdom of priests” to God (Exodus 19:6). Moses was the earthly stand-in for God. He represented God to the people he led; there was a corporate unity, or a corporate, common identity between Moses and the Nation of Israel. Moses took the people to God. He anticipated David, who reprised Moses as leader and corporate head of the nation. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of both Moses and David. So we are united with Jesus, one with Him, sent by Him to continue carrying out the New Exodus – not just from Egypt but from the whole world. May we not also fail!!!

3. **“Abraham is our father”** (John 8:39), the Pharisees proudly proclaimed. But Jesus explained that they were not Abraham’s descendants because if they were they would do as Abraham did. So, is Abraham really *our* father? In Galatians 3, Paul says he’s the father of all who belong to Christ. But, if we profess to be in Christ, do we do as Abraham did? Abraham was a transitional person; he existed between the Garden, a failed place, and the Land of Israel (in the future also a failed place). He lived in a tent in a land among pagans; he had no real place of his own. His role was to look for what God had promised, which would be fulfilled in the far future, after his death. And he was OK with that. God had said, “Go!” and he went. He obeyed God; he acted on His promises. And because he obeyed God, God’s own righteousness was imputed to him. The text says “he believed God,” but the *pistis/pisteo* Greek word, though translated into English as “believe” or “faith,” is intricately linked with *doing*. The word connotes commitment. It’s a relational word, we *believe* within a relationship. The term involves performance, action, not merely possession of a certain

knowledge. That Abrahamic obedience was so important to God that his descendents, the people of the Nation of Israel, were God's own elect people forever, God took them as His adopted son. *Pistis/pisteo* is the expected response to God's Word, to His promises, to His commands. The Church is like Abraham. We're also in a transitional era, between the 1st Advent of Christ and His Return. We also are dwelling in a land among pagans, waiting for and looking unto the future when we will realize our promised blessing. Our role, as with Abraham, is to reproduce. It's to give rise to a new generation of followers of Christ who will do the same, give rise to a new generation of followers of Christ, etc. It's to bring blessing to the Gentile nations of the world by doing Gospel outreach. Because that "blessing" is Christ.

4. "In humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4). Verse 4 unfortunately is poorly translated in most English versions. I have it here as Paul intended it, enjoining on us self-denial in the service of others. We have, in other words, two mutually exclusive options: We either serve ourselves, or we serve others. Not both (as most English translations wrongly suggest). What a radical, extreme teaching this is! We are to totally deny ourselves for the sake of meeting the needs of others. Why? Because that's exactly what Christ did. And Paul says we're to be "like-minded." We're to have the same love that Christ has and do what Christ did, *viz*, sacrifice Himself for the sake of needy others. Thus Paul includes at this point the lovely Christ-hymn (in vv. 5-11), which expounds on the totally radical verse 4. Jesus is humbly others-centered, others-focused. This imitation of self-sacrificing service to others is how, Paul goes on, we "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12c). Have we been gripped by what Paul wrote here? "Do nothing out of self interest" (v. 3a). *Nothing!!* How much more forcefully can Paul instruct us that we're to be utterly selfless in imitating the selfless Christ Jesus. We deny ourselves to serve the interests of God and the needs of others, just as the Son humbled Himself to serve the interests of the Father and the needs of sinful humanity, even though it meant for Him terrible suffering. I suggest we in the Church today know nothing of this, the most basic and essential aspect of what it means to be a Christian. We all need to repent and commit to being as radical in our lives as the Word of God here demands. The Spirit has been given to enable us to obey this command . . . if we want to do that. Tragically, too many of us are smugly complacent with how we are living, serving ourselves full-time, and have no intention to change. May God have mercy on us.

5. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The Greek word, *adialeiptōs*, means "unceasingly." The NIV translates it "continually," but that's wrong. "Continually" means repeatedly or intermittently, with gaps of indeterminate length between episodes. The translators should have used "continuously," which would capture the meaning of *adialeiptōs*. Paul is actually saying, be in prayer *non-stop* in your life. Huh? What Paul has in mind is, we're to be in constant, life-long communion with God, with our Father in heaven. Brother Lawrence, the author centuries ago of "Practicing the Presence of God," lived that way. The indwelling Spirit makes it possible for all who follow Christ. Notice the surrounding verses: live in peace, be filled with joy, show kindness and patience to others (a form of love), and be holy. These are the characteristics of the Godhead! Paul is saying, practice NOW what we'll be experiencing in our glorified future state of being, participation in the Godhead. The Persons of the Trinity, in perfect union, enjoy perfect incessant communication. We're to experience that kind of fellowship now. Communication is the essence of a relationship. Prayer is also a form of worship. It not only honors God, it binds us to God. It humbly acknowledges that God is sovereign and rules His creation; He rules *us*. So prayer is an exercise of faith in God. Something else: The members of the Godhead have one will. We, in our humanity have our own will, and it's a corrupted one. Prayer brings our will into harmony with God's will. Prayer is the greatest privilege God grants us in this life. One of the reasons Christ came was to provide this privileged access. Get this: Whatever the circumstances in our life (and those circumstances may have been lovingly sent by God), He is interested in our response, which ought to be prayer in faith.

6. "When I have brought them into the land . . . and when they eat their fill and thrive, they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me" (Deuteronomy 31:20). Are the comforts, prosperity, peace and freedoms we have in America blessings from God? Or are they from Satan to provoke us to worship other gods? No one can answer this. We really should reflect very carefully about this. But we can't! Our soft lives, our obscenely self-indulgent lives, prevent us from thinking seriously about *anything* deep. We've actually been corrupted by the good life; we're surfeited and comatose. So we don't, indeed, *can't* confront this issue. Prosperity always means we forget God. But we love prosperity, because it's more real to us. We suppose Satan only persecutes believers, but he has other ploys. And it may be that He has the Church in the West already securely in his pocket. A wise person will think deeply about this verse.