
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

August 7, 2016

Dedication

“I made myself holy on their behalf so that they also would be made holy in the truth.”
John 17:19 (Common English Bible)

This one prayer by Jesus may be the most sacred passage in all four of the Gospels. As the shadow of the cross grew larger upon our Lord, he gives himself to God, and he gives himself fully, without reservations. The depth and richness of the prayer is missed if the reader fails to grasp the deep meaning of the word, “holy.” Throughout the New Testament, as it is used here by Jesus, the word means, “Set apart.” What Jesus does by this prayer is to fully dedicate his life to God’s purposes; Jesus has “set apart” his life for God’s desires thereby surrendering any other pursuit he might have had in life. Before anyone chooses to dedicate their life to God, it is wise to ponder deeply this example of our Lord.

First, Jesus begins his prayer, “I made myself holy.” What is at once both unmistakable and essential for any authentic commitment to God is that it must be personal. No one is truly dedicated if the dedication is made on their behalf. Dedication to God is a personal decision of any individual. Additionally, though participation in a corporate service of dedication with others similarly making a commitment may be quite meaningful, such participation does not necessarily mean that an individual has been dedicated. The act of dedication, an extremely personal decision, is hidden in the heart of the individual. Only the individual and God know if an authentic dedication has occurred.

Second, Jesus’ prayer continued, “...on their behalf.” Here, Jesus demonstrates that any dedication is always made for some specific task, for positively impacting a people or a movement. For Jesus, his dedication is to share in God’s burden for the world, to seek out those who have lost their way and bring them back to God. His dedication is undertaken for a particular people, for a particular purpose, and so must our own dedication. A dedication that does not result in some urge to do something definite, to make some difference for God in the local community or the world is empty and a waste of time. “...on their behalf,” Jesus makes his dedication.

Finally, Jesus’ brief prayer concludes, “...that they also would be made holy in the truth.” The certain indication here is that any motive for doing something positive is for the purpose of changing lives. Jesus sought to change the lives of others, to bless them that their lives may, in turn, bless others. Absent in his dedication is any hint that Jesus sought to win favor or acclaim. That would be unworthy of a dedication. Jesus’ dedication was to influence others to similarly dedicate their lives to the purposes of God. The result would be that God’s kingdom would experience an exponential expansion throughout the world. Whenever men and women gather to dedicate themselves to God, it is good to understand, with considerable clarity, what Jesus has taught such a dedication entails.

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