

## INTRODUCTION

Prayer is an important part of the Christian life. Maybe you can relate to the Christian who prayed this prayer. "Lord, so far today, I've done all right. I haven't lost my temper, been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or mean. I'm glad about that. But in a few minutes, Lord, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on, I'm really going to need your help. Amen."

You can learn a lot about a person by listening to them pray. If you could follow me around for a week, and listen to my prayers, you would learn a lot about me. You would see my heart.

We have that amazing opportunity in this chapter, because we are going to eavesdrop on one of the prayers of Jesus. Jesus prayed a lot. In Luke 6 we read where Jesus prayed all night. In Mark 1:35 we learn that Jesus got up a great while before sunrise to pray, and He was still praying when the disciples found him later in the morning. But we don't know the content of those prayers.

But here in John 17, we read the longest and most beautiful prayer recorded from the lips of Jesus. We can learn a lot about the character of Jesus in this prayer.

I call this the REAL Lord's Prayer. In Luke 11 the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." He gave them a model prayer, "Our Father who is Heaven..." But it's never called the "Lord's Prayer" in the Bible, that's just a name someone gave it. Actually, this model prayer wasn't a prayer that Jesus could have prayed. He said, "Forgive us our sins and we forgive those who sin against us." Jesus was sinless. It's a great model prayer, so John 17 should be called the real Lord's Prayer.

This prayer is easily divided into three sections. First, in the first five verses, Jesus prayed for himself to be glorified. In the next fourteen verses Jesus prayed for His disciples to be fortified and sanctified. In the final seven verses Jesus prayed for all believers to be unified. We're going to share three messages from the World's Most Valuable Prayer.

John 17:1-12. Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to everyone you have given him. This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ. I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed."

"I have revealed your name to the people you gave me from the world. They were yours, you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, because I have given them the words you gave me. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from you. They have believed that you sent me."

"I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me because they are yours. Everything I have is yours, and everything you have is mine, and I am glorified in them."

I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I was protecting them by your name that you have given me. I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled.

In this message, I want us to examine two aspects of the World's Most Valuable Prayer. And I'll give you a heads up I'll be spending about 75% of our time this morning on the first aspect

## **I. JESUS PRAYED THAT HE WOULD BE GLORIFIED.**

Jesus prayed for Himself. Some people think it is selfish to pray for yourself. This wasn't a selfish prayer, it was a personal prayer. And I pray for myself all the time. Every Sunday before I walk into this room I get alone with God and pray that He will fill me with His Holy Spirit and that He would anoint my mind and my lips to share His Word. And when He was praying for Himself He was praying for His Father to be glorified.

In John 17:1 He prayed, "Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you." Jesus used the words glory or glorify five times in these first five verses. And in the prayer, He reveals two ways in which He will glorify the Father.

### **A. By giving us eternal life.**

The concept of eternal life is one of the most important truths in the New Testament. It occurs 44 times. In Romans 6:23, the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord."

That's the ultimate bad news/good news verse. We're all sinners and the paycheck we earn is death, not physical death, but eternal separation from God. But the good news is that your loving Creator offers you a gift—and you can't earn a gift. The gift is eternal life, and it is found in Jesus Christ. You can choose to take the paycheck of death or accept the gift of eternal life.

But there's much confusion about WHAT eternal life really is. If I asked you to write down the definition of eternal life, we would get a lot of different answers. Many of them would say something like "Eternal life is living forever with God." That's close, but not the best definition. We don't have to wonder about it because Jesus gives us the perfect definition in John 17:3. He said, "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ." That's one of the most important verses in the Bible. If you write in your Bible, underline, highlight and circle that verse. I used to say if you're using a screen don't write on it, but there's a better way: If you're using the Bible app, you can tap that verse twice and a pop-up appears from the bottom of the screen and you can highlight it.

Religion is boring. Many sermons are boring. We've all listened to boring sermons that seem to go on forever. When I was a kid I was amazed how long a thirty-minute sermon seemed compared to thirty-minute episode of Gilligan's Island.

A man in the oil and gas business whose preacher preached long, boring sermons, said one Sunday, "Son, if I'm drilling for oil and don't find oil after thirty minutes, I stop boring."

Religion is boring. But knowing Jesus Christ is the most exciting experience that you'll ever have in this life.

Eternal life is knowing God and knowing Jesus. Do you know Jesus?

Some of you know Jesus the same way you know Abraham Lincoln. You know him as an historical character, someone who lived and died and did great things.

Let me bring it up to the present. I have a personal relationship with my wife. I know her. She knows me. We relate to one another on a daily basis. We talk together and share life. But on the other hand, I don't know Tiger Woods. I've watched him play golf on television. I've never even seen him play in person. I don't have a personal relationship with him. So which one is it for you? Can you honestly say you have the kind of relationship with God that you have with someone on earth you relate to on a daily basis? Or do you feel Jesus Christ is some superstar somewhere that, "Oh it would be nice!" but you don't really know him. Well my friend, you can know him—and that's eternal life.

The second way Jesus glorified His Father was by

### **B. By completing His work.**

Jesus was almost finished. He said, "Father, the hour is at hand." He wasn't referring to sixty minutes. He knew the time for Him to go to the cross was nearing. In verse 4, Jesus prayed, "I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do."

The word "glory" is an important word in the Bible. It is found over 350 times. The root of the word has to do with brilliant light. When the glory of the Lord visibly filled the tabernacle, the rabbis called it the Shekinah. And you see this meaning when Jesus was born and the angels appeared to the shepherds. The Bible says, "The glory of the Lord SHONE round about them."

Jesus said He had shared this glory with the Father from the beginning. But for the thirty years in which Jesus walked as a man, it was if that glory was hidden. You can think of it in these three thoughts. First, His glory was covered when he lived in the flesh. There's a great Christmas song that says, "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see."

Second, His glory was uncovered in His miracles. It was as if a little flash of glory was released when Jesus performed a miracle. Do you remember the women crawling in a crowd to just touch the hem of his garment? There's a beautiful painting by Daniel Carriola in the chapel at

Magdal on the Sea of Galilee. There are no faces, just feet and one hand reaching out. At the point of the miracle the artist added a spark of power. Jesus stopped and asked, "Who touched me?" Peter said, "Lord, you're in a crowd, everyone is touching you." Jesus said, "No I felt power, virtue, go out of me." And the best example of this was at the Transfiguration of Jesus. HE took Peter, James, and John with him up to a mountain and suddenly the veil of his flesh was removed and HE began to glow and shine: His Divine glory was uncovered.

And finally, His glory was recovered when He returned to Heaven. So, when you see Jesus, what are you expecting? Do you imagine him as regular guy with long brown hair, a beard, and olive skin? That's the wrong image. Jesus has been glorified.

For instance, the Apostle John was close to Jesus. They were literally bosom buddies at the Last Supper. They probably skipped stones across the Sea of Galilee. But in Revelation 1, John has a vision where he meets the glorified Christ. He didn't recognize him because the hair and face of Jesus was glowing white, and His eyes were like burning fire. John fell down on the ground out of fright. But Jesus reached out for him and said, "Don't be afraid, John, it's me."

If you could glimpse into Heaven now, you would see the brilliance of the glorified Christ. The writer of Hebrews describes Jesus in these terms. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Hebrews 1:3)

So, Jesus prayed that He would be glorified. And that prayer has been answered.

## **II. JESUS PRAYED FOR HIS DISCIPLES TO BE FORTIFIED.**

Jesus spent the first five verses praying for Himself and the rest of the prayer praying for others. We know He was praying for the eleven disciples who were with Him that night, but did you know He was praying for us? It's true, 2,000 years ago Jesus was praying for us that night. "I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word." (John 17:20) That's us. We are believers today because of the words written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So as Jesus prayed for His disciples, He was praying the same thing for us today.

### **A. He prayed that we would be protected by God's Name.**

I'm just going to introduce this part of the prayer because the next two messages will be devoted to Jesus praying for His disciples. While Jesus had been physically with the disciples, He could protect them. But He was returning to the Father. So in John 17:11 He prayed, "Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me." So what was the name that the Father gave to Jesus? It was the name "I am." The same name God gave Moses at the burning bush. Seven times in this narrative Jesus had made the claim as the Great I am. He said, "I am the Bread of life. I am the Light of the world. I am the door. I am the Good Shepherd. I am the Resurrection and the Life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. And earlier on this night He had said, "I am the true vine."

There is protective power in the name of Jesus. Whenever you feel afraid or threatened just speak the name of Jesus and you'll find inner strength and peace.

### **B. He prayed that we would be unified in one purpose.**

Jesus prayed that we would be as one even as He and the Father are one. So what is the purpose that unifies us? Our life's goal should be the same as that of Jesus—to bring glory to God. The way we do that is by knowing Jesus and making Him known to others. Once we receive eternal life, knowing Jesus, we want to share this good news with others. Moments before Jesus returned from Heaven He issued our marching orders in Acts 1:8. He said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The thing that unites us is that we are all committed to accomplishing this purpose. To take the good news to those who have never heard.

### **CONCLUSION**

A couple of years ago, two very famous, influential people died within three weeks of each other. On March 14, Stephen Hawking died. He was one of the most brilliant physicists of all time. His book, *A Brief History of Time*, sold over ten million copies.

He was diagnosed with ALS when he was 21 and told that he might live for two more years. He lived with ALS for over fifty years and was 76 when he died. Stephen Hawking was a gentle atheist: He didn't bear any hostility toward believers.

Hawking wrote: "I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken-down computers; that is a fairy story for people afraid of the dark." So, was Stephen Hawking correct? Did his brain just stop and then there was nothing? Is the idea of an afterlife only a fairy tale?

Three weeks before Stephen Hawking died, another famous person also died. His name was Billy Graham. He died at age 99 after struggling with Parkinson's disease for the past twenty-five years. Billy Graham said this about death: "Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God."

Now, who was right? For the sake of comparison, let's put Stephen Hawking on one side and Billy Graham on the other. Is death the end and there is no afterlife as Dr. Hawking claimed? Or as Dr. Graham said, is there an afterlife where we may spend eternity with God in a place called heaven? Both of them cannot be correct. And the most important decision in your short life is to decide which position is correct.

Blaise Pascal was a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Christian French Philosopher and mathematician. He presented what is called the Pascal Wager, like making a bet. It is the proposition that each

person must wager whether God exists or not. Possibility #1: A person like Billy Graham believes in God and lives a Christian life and then they die and they are wrong—there is no afterlife. What has Billy Graham lost? Pascal reasoned that he lost relatively little. Even if he has no afterlife, at least he lived a life and meaningful life filled with hope and a desire to show love to others.

Possibility #2: Let's say a person like Stephen Hawking chooses not to believe in God or the afterlife. He could still live a full and purposeful life here. But what if Hawking was wrong and there is a God and an afterlife? Pascal reasoned that his loss would be catastrophic—an eternity separated from a God he didn't believe in.

Pascal's wager has been criticized, because the Christian life isn't about hedging your bets to avoid going to hell. I believe in Jesus Christ, not because it is a reasonable choice. I am a Christian because I responded to God's offer of love. And God wants to have a loving relationship with you. He is offering the free gift of eternal life.

Vance Havner used to tell the story of a man who came home from work and asked his wife, "How was your day?"

She said, "Not too good. I've been upset all afternoon." He said, "Sit down and tell me what happened."

She said, "This afternoon someone rang our doorbell. When I opened the door, there was a well-dressed man there, but I didn't know him. He smiled at me and said, 'Ma'am, may I ask you a question?' And say, 'Yes.' He said, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?'"

She said, "I was so surprised by the question that I didn't know what to say, so after a few moments of silence, I just closed the door and he left. And I've been unsettled since then."

Her husband got angry. He said, "Sweetheart, why didn't you tell the man that you sing in the church choir every Sunday and that you are an officer in the Lady's Missionary Circle? Why didn't you tell him that you hardly ever miss church?"

His wife said, "That's not what he asked me. He asked me if I know Jesus."

Religious activity is good, but it is no substitute for knowing Jesus. And that's what eternal life is—knowing Jesus.

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

## OUTLINE

### I. JESUS PRAYED THAT HE WOULD BE GLORIFIED.

"Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify in you." *John 17:1 CSB*

A. By giving us eternal life.

"Eternal life is knowing God through Jesus." *John 17:3 CSB*

B. By completing His work.

"I have glorified you on the earth by completing the work you gave me to do." *John 17:4 CSB*

His glory was

Covered while He lived in His flesh.

Uncovered in His miracles.

Recovered when He returned to Heaven.

### II. JESUS PRAYED FOR HIS DISCIPLES TO BE FORTIFIED.

A. He prayed that we would be protected by God's Name.

"Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me." *John 17:11 CSB*

B. He prayed that we would be unified in one purpose.

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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