

## JOHN 17

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Known as "The High Priestly Prayer"

1. This year is the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation, started by Martin Luther with the nailing of his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the church door
2. Philip Melanchthon, co-Reformer with Martin Luther, said this of John 17:

"There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than the prayer offered up by the Son of God himself."

- Quoted in Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*

#### B. Scenario

1. Jesus and His disciples have just celebrated the Passover Meal together
2. Scholars are not unanimous on where He prayed this prayer
  - a. Are they still in the Upper Room ?
  - b. Are they walking across the Kidron Valley, heading toward Gethsemane ?

#### 3. Jesus is sharing the thoughts of His heart with them

- a. Chapter 15 : "I am the Vine"
- b. Chapter 16: Teaching about the coming Holy Spirit

#### 4. Wherever they are, Jesus stops to pray in the midst of them

- a. Chapter 17: The prayer to His Father, interceding for them and the world
  - 1). Jesus prays for Himself
  - 2). Jesus prays for His disciples
  - 3). Jesus prays for all believers
- b. It is founded on His ultimate encouragement, John 16.33

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

#### C. With that in mind, Warren Wiersbe suggests the following for Christ's priorities

1. First - The glory of God
2. 2nd - The well-being and success of His followers
  - a. The sanctity of God's people
  - b. The unity of the church
  - c. The ministry of sharing the Gospel with a lost world

## II. THE LESSON

### A. Part 1: Jesus praying for Himself (17.1-5)

**[Someone read John 17.1-5]**

#### 1. It may seem strange for Jesus to pray for Himself

“A prayer for self is not by any means necessarily a selfish prayer” - Dr. R.A. Torrey

- a. There is nothing wrong with a servant of God asking for the personal means to bring about God's glory

#### 2. What is the intent of Jesus praying for Himself ?

##### a. "glorify" and "glory" occur five times in these opening verses

- 1). "glorify" to humans means to make great, but Jesus meant it to reveal the character of someone
- 2). "'Glory' is about seeing and understanding God more clearly; being able to grasp more accurately and deeply who He really is"

Paterson, A. *Opening Up John's Gospel*

#### 3. vs 1

##### a. "Father, the hour has come ...."

- 1). Jesus knows that His agonies as the time of His substitutionary sacrifice has arrived

##### b. "...glorify Your Son..."

- 1). Jesus is about to go through the terrible events leading up to the Crucifixion, and then the Crucifixion, itself

##### 2). He is asking the Father for

- a.) Sustaining Him through this suffering
- b.) Accepting His sacrifice for all of our sins

##### c. "...that the Son may glorify You..."

- 1). He is asking that His glory from before He became a Man be returned when He returns to Heaven
- 2). This is to glorify the Father, having completed the Father's assignment in complete obedience throughout His life

4. vs 3: "This is eternal life, that they may know You..."

a. Jesus' accomplishments on the Cross

- 1). Redeemed mankind
- 2). Made it possible to accept His sacrifice and be eternally in Heaven with Him
- 3). "know" > Gk *ginosko*
  - a.) "2 to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of. 2A to understand"

Strong, J., *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*

- b.) Through the Holy Spirit, the believer can grow to know God
- c.) In Heaven, the believer will know God at the deepest and most intimate level

5. vs 4:

"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do."

a. What did Jesus accomplish ?

- 1). Jesus revealed the Father's glory and character by how He acted, what He said, and what He did
  - a.) Pure life
  - b.) Gracious, wise words
  - c.) Loving care for others
  - d.) Miracles
- 2). (Jn 1.14) "...we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father..."
- 3). His completed self-sacrifice gave all believers eternal life
  - a.) We think of Jesus as the Father's gift to us (John 3.16)
  - b.) But believers are stated as God's gift to Jesus seven times in this prayer, e.g.

17.2

"...that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life"

b. But how can all this coming torture, bloodiness, agony and death glorify God ?

1). The Cross is a perfect demonstration of God's character and glory

a.) It shows how seriously God regards sin

- God is focused on opposing rebellion against His will
- Ultimately, he punishes to the uttermost failure to obey

b.) It shows His infinite grace and mercy that is available to the penitent sinner

c.) It shows that His will was being accomplished

- God had known before creation that He would rescue a chosen people from the sin condition to be His own

Eph 1.3-4

"3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him."

2). Jesus was praying that this character of God would be seen through His life and this final action

6. vs 5: "...with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

a. When Jesus became incarnate as a man, the glory He had with the Father became veiled

b. But surrounding the time of the Crucifixion we see two instances of His glory restored

1). Briefly, at His Transfiguration - Matt 17.2

"And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light"

a.) Fully at His Ascension - Mk 16.19

"...So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God"

2). In both cases, His glory is temporarily restored, but as the Perfect Man we see later in Revelation

a.) Rev 1.12-16

"12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me.

And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength."

B. Part 2: Now Jesus prayed **for His disciples and all believers who follow** (17.6-26)

1. Jesus now gives instructions for how His work is to be carried on after He leaves

a. (vs 18) Orders to the eleven disciples, and later to all believers who follow

b. Their instructions are to carry out the mission of spreading the gospel worldwide

1). Jesus is **praying** that the Father will grant them resources and success in this

***[Someone read John 17.6-19]***

2. Essential marks of a believer carrying out the mission

a. OBEDIENCE to the truth

1). Note this emphasis on truth in His prayer

a.) vs 6

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

b.) vs 8

"for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me"

c.) vs 14

"I have given them Your word..."

d.) vs 17

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth"

2). Jesus focused on the end result of God's truth for His disciples

vs 13

"But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy **made full** in themselves."

a.) "made full" > Gk *pleroo*

1 to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full. 1A to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally. 1A1 I abound, I am liberally supplied.  
2 to render full, i.e. to complete. 2A to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim.

Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*. .

b.) Jesus had related this fact to them earlier

John 15.10-11

"10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

3). Why is this important to the mission of spreading the Gospel ??

a.) Jesus prayed that His disciples would obey God's commands

b.) He also prayed that their joy would be full as a result of this obedience

c.) How do unbelievers react to the Gospel ?

- If it is shared by those disobeying God's commands, they will be regarded as hypocrites

- If those sharing it are obeying God's commands, AND they live joyfully, unbelievers will see that the Gospel has credence and is desirable for living

d.) This is true in whatever situation or culture it is practiced

- Office, factory, farm

- Home, social setting

- People see how the believer handles life's ups and downs, and are then either turned off, or open to the message

4). So Jesus prayed to the Father to **enable** this in His followers

a.) We are incapable of consistently living this way on our own

b.) But Jesus prayed for the help and guidance we need from the Father

- His Word

- His Holy Spirit in us

**b. COURAGE because of the truth**

**1). John 17.14-15: Jesus prays for believers in the face of the challenge**

14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."

**a.) Note that Jesus asks two things of the Father**

- Don't take individuals out of the world when they become believers
- Protect them from Satan as they live obedient lives for Him

b.) "Here's the terrible irony: the people who bring to the world the most glorious and liberating message of grace are the most persecuted religious group in the whole world."

Paterson, A.. *Opening Up John's Gospel*

**c.) Jesus has a high expectancy of His followers !**

- We are to remain in the fight to convey truth to unbelievers and allow the Holy Spirit to convert them to true believers
- We are to rely on guidance and protection from God to do this

**2). Jesus asks for specific enablement to meet the challenge**

**a.) John 17.11**

"I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, **keep them in Your name**, the name which You have given Me"

- Jesus is praying for the gospel-promoting believer's safety
- The success of that is based on the Father's Name
  - .. A person's "name" (i.e. reputation) reflects his character, what he is really like
  - .. What does God's Name reflect ?
    - His absolute power
    - His sovereignty and supremacy
    - His infinite wisdom in how to apply it
    - His infinite love for His disciples in fighting forward as His ambassadors, enabling and protecting them
- All of this undergirds the believer's assignment to promote the Gospel in the face of Satan's opposition

**b.) John 17.15-17**

15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 "Sanctify them in the **truth; Your word is truth.**"

- c.) We are to **take courage** *in God's Word* for fighting to promote the Gospel
- He is behind us
    - .. God is in control
    - .. His will will be done
  - The **truth** of His Word is that we have all that is needed to be effective ambassador's of the King ! He has given His Word !

**c. UNITY in the truth**

***[Someone read John 17.20-26]***

1). Note these verses of Jesus' prayer

John 17.20-21

20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me"

2). There is some debate as to exactly what "unity" Jesus was praying for

- a.) A global Christian movement ?
- b.) A uniting of all Christian religions ?
- c.) But these are structural unities

3). Jesus is praying for all believers to be united as the living church organism

- a.) Doesn't matter how we differ in non-essentials outside the Bible doctrine of primary gospel truths
- b.) It is about being united by the Holy Spirit in us as intimately as is the unity among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
  - Began with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, in answer to Jesus' prayer for unity
  - Continues as each person becomes a believer by accepting Christ as Savior and receives the same Holy Spirit
  - This is colossal ! We are united by the Holy Spirit in the truths of the Gospel

4). Jesus is also praying for all believers to be united in love

John 17.23

23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

a.) Believers are widely different throughout the world

- Different cultures and backgrounds
- Different personalities
- Different personal goals and objectives
- Different likes and dislikes

b.) Jesus was praying that such diversity of believers would be **united** through the same love that exists among the Persons of the Godhead

- The goal of this unity is twofold

.. "...that the world may know that You sent Me..."  
> Christ's divine mission

.. "...loved them, even as You have loved Me..." >

The world will see that God loves believers as deeply and as intimately as He loves Jesus

- **Unity is essential** to successfully evangelizing the world
- Only love for each other and for God and from God can overcome this diversity among us to make us effective for God's purposes

"It is not the future glory of the heavenly state, but the secret of that present unity just before spoken of; the glory, therefore, of the indwelling Spirit of Christ; the glory of an accepted state, of a holy character, of every grace."

Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D.

*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*

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"Where else in the world can you find such diversity unified by such love? That's why the Christian family is such an important and remarkable expression of the gospel."

*Paterson, A. (2010). Opening Up John's Gospel*

### C. Conclusion

1. John 17 is The “High Priestly Prayer”
2. In it, Jesus ...
  - a. Assures that the Father’s and His glory are foremost in our efforts to promote the Gospel to others
  - b. Prayed that we believes would show three characteristics to achieve successful evangelism
    - 1). Obedience to the truth as evidence it is the only truth
    - 2). Courage to witness because we have the truth
    - 3). Unity to apply all of our God-given resources to showing the truth