

John Chapter 17

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Introduction:

- **Paul Butler** wrote:

This is one of the most precious chapters of the Fourth Gospel. Here the Incarnate Son pours out His divine heart in prayer for Himself, for His intimate friends and for all believers. He prays for you and for me. This is really the Lord's Prayer. The prayer in Luke 11 commonly known as "The Lord's Prayer," is not His prayer but one He taught the disciples to pray.

- The High Priest of Israel had certain matters to attend to:

In future generations, the purification ceremony will be performed by the priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve as high priest in place of his ancestor Aaron. He will put on the holy linen garments and purify the Most Holy Place, the Tabernacle, the altar, the priests, and the entire congregation. (Leviticus 16:32-33 NLT)

Jesus is about to take the role of the High Priest and pray for Himself, His Eleven men and all believers in following generations. The emphasis here is the unity of all believers. It is one of the developments with which God is most concerned.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF

(17:1.) After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so He can give glory back to You.

- Here, Jesus prayed with His eyes looking **to heaven**. There is not just one posture for prayer.
- This is the only long and continuous prayer of Jesus in the New Testament Scriptures. The prayer was prayed when those around Jesus were gloomy and discouraged.
- The **hour** here is not literal, but points to a time very close at hand. **James Smith** writes about "the hour:"

At various times in his ministry Jesus explained his actions by saying that his hour had not yet come. (John 2:4; 7:8; 7:30; 8:20) Jesus recognizes that now his hour had come—the hour to which the celestial clock had been counting down since the sin in Eden.

- **Glorify** means to set someone or something forth in its best possible light such as a bride on her wedding day.
- The **Father** would **glorify** the **Son** in the resurrection and the **Son** would **glorify** the **Father** by showing His victory over the grave for all ages to see.

(2.) For You have given Him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one You have given Him.

- Jesus had and has **authority** over **everyone** as also expressed in Matthew 28:18.

Jesus came and told His disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

(Matthew 28:18-19 NLT)

- Those who do not acknowledge that **authority** are rebels in God's sight.

- Only those given by the Heavenly Father are submitting to that **authority**. The rest either pick and choose some of the teachings of Jesus, or ignore Him and His teaching altogether.
- They were **given** by the Father in that they were convinced by the miracles that Jesus was from heaven. So believers are the Father's gift to the Son.

(3.) And this is the way to have eternal life -- to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the One You sent to earth.

- The *only* way to have **eternal life** is to **know** both the Father and the Son whom the Father **sent**.

(4.) I brought glory to You here on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do.

- Whatever Jesus did was to **glorify** the Father. He did not sin even once. He lived a perfect life. He preached the message of repentance and the coming kingdom. He healed the sick as evidence to the throngs. He did verbal battle with the Jewish leaders. The purpose of each event was to bring **glory** to the Father.

(5.) Now, Father, bring Me into the glory We shared before the world began.

- Jesus now asks for a return of His earlier **glory**— before the world **began**. Both the **Father** and the Son had **glory** before **the world began**.
- **Paul Butler** writes:
The scriptures are plain enough that the Son enjoyed equality with the Father; the Son, though rich, became poor that we might become rich; He emptied Himself of divine glory and became obedient even unto death. All creatures and all creation sing and shout His praise; all creatures and all creation serve Him.

While on earth His magnificent glory was veiled by the form of flesh, but in Heaven all of His magnificent glory shines forth. In Heaven, the Lamb, standing as though it had been slain, is worshiped and praised as, "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and the riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing . . . for ever and ever;" (Rev. 5:11-14).

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

(6.) "I have revealed You to the ones You gave Me from this world. They were always Yours. You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

- Jesus did not just *talk* about the Father, He **revealed** the Father to those who love truth. He revealed the love, goodness, righteousness, grace and holiness of the Father.
- These disciples belong to the Father and have obeyed the Son. But note how imperfect that obedience has been. God does not require absolute perfection, but sees their future potential.

(7.) Now they know that everything I have is a gift from You, (8.) for I have passed on to them the message You gave Me. They accepted it and know that I came from You, and they believe You sent Me.

- After seeing the performance of Jesus, the disciples see that His power was and is a **gift** from the Father. Jesus accepted the limited **belief** of the disciples. They were very far from perfect, yet He accepted them. So He accepts us, too.
- Jesus simply repeated what the Father had told Him to say. This convinced the believers in the Father that they would **believe** in the Son as well.

(9.) "My prayer is not for the world, but for those You have given Me, because they belong to You.

- Jesus **prayed** specifically for these eleven believers in the Father. The rest of mankind was not in focus just now.

(10.) All who are Mine belong to You, and You have given them to Me, so they bring Me glory.

- These believers belonged to the Father as well as the Son and they bring **glory** to Him. They were in every sense men of God.
- Jesus wanted more than simple obedience from His eleven, He wanted to be **glorified** in them. And that is what happened in the following years. Here are three samples from Acts, the history of the early church:

So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too. (Acts 6:7 NLT)

The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers. (Acts 9:31 NLT)

So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect. (Acts 19:20 NLT)

(11.) Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to You. Holy Father, You have given Me Your name; now protect them by the power of Your name so that they will be united just as We are.

- Jesus knew that His **departure** was near at hand, but His disciples would remain. He asks the **Holy Father** to **keep** these believers and lead them to be united just as the Father and the Son are **united**. The **Father** would be active in the development of the coming church.

(12.) During My time here, I protected them by the power of the name You gave Me. I guarded them so that not one was lost, except the one headed for destruction, as the Scriptures foretold.

- Jesus had **kept** His men safe. Only Judas was lost and that fulfilled a **Scripture**, Psalm 109. These verses are difficult to grasp so we have chosen the *Amplified Bible with Notes*:
Set a wicked man over him [as a judge], **and let** [a malicious] **accuser stand at his right hand. When** [the wicked] **is judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer** [for leniency] **be turned into a sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office and charge.** [Act 1:20] (Psalms 109:6-8 AMPC+)

This is the same Psalm that Peter quoted as applying to Judas in Acts 1:20. While it is not clear in our English translations, yet we have this endorsement from an inspired Apostle.

(13.) "Now I am coming to You. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with My joy.

- Jesus did not want to leave His men in sorrow. He wanted them to be **filled with joy**.
- **James Smith** points out that this prayer may have been out loud. The disciples would have heard it. John could have recalled it later by the Spirit's power. This way the Eleven could have shared in the **joy** that Jesus was experiencing.

(14.) I have given them Your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

- Being a believer means not fitting into **the world**. Jesus was not of this **world** in any sense. An extension of this truth was spoken by the apostle Paul:

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing

the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.
(Romans 12:2 NLT)

15.) I'm not asking You to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. (16.) They do not belong to this world any more than I do.

- His believers would still be free moral agents, but with the protection of God. He wants all of us to stay in the **world** and face **the evil one** until a time that He chooses.

(17.) Make them holy by Your truth; teach them Your word, which is truth.

- **Holiness** is not just a feeling, it is learning the **truth** that God wants us to know from His **word**.
- Jesus has spoken a great **truth** in four words. Every believer needs to make it an anchor for their life. **Your word . . . is truth.**
- In a few hours Jesus would speak of this **truth** before the Governor:

Pilate said, "So You are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true." "What is truth?" Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime. (John 18:37-38 NLT)

- This phrase, **Your word, which is truth**, has been an anchor for this writer since he learned them as a youth. When the **truths** of God have been challenged in the classroom, this foundational **truth** comes back to mind.

(18.) Just as You sent Me into the world, I am sending them into the world.

- The Father **sent** the Son **into the world** to do what only the Son *could do* -- die for all sin. Now the Son is sending the men He

trained **into the world** to do what even the Son *could not do* on His own: preach the gospel to every creature.

(19.) And I give Myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by Your truth.

- Jesus **gave** Himself for the Eleven in order that they may be made **holy** by the **truth**.

JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS

(20.) "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in Me through their message.

- Jesus envisioned multiple layers of **believers** extending for generations to come. This was the beginning of something larger than anyone would imagine.

(21.) I pray that they will all be one, just as You and I are one -- as You are in Me, Father, and I am in You. And may they be in Us so that the world will believe You sent Me.

- His vision was that all **believers** will be **one** in the same way that Jesus and the **Father** are **one**. The expected outcome of this unity is that the **world will believe** in the **Father**.
- **James Smith** expresses this in lofty words:

Jesus envisioned the great multitude of every nation, race, language, class, and social level responding to the gospel message. He prayed that they might rise above their different backgrounds and find a common bond in their allegiance to Christ.

The oneness of the Father and Son should be reflected in the oneness of believers. In 17:11 Jesus prayed that the eleven might reflect the unity of the Godhead; now he broadened that petition.

Sadly by their attitudes and actions Christians have not fulfilled this final request of Christ. He would have his church be one in love, one in spirit, one in faith, and one in mission;

but believers insist on their parties, their sects and their denominations.

A fractured message, divided resources and differing agendas hinders the world-wide mission of the church.

- Unity and truth (verse 17) must be kept in balance. Total emphasis on unity leads to believing nothing at all and this describes quite a section of the Protestant world. Total emphasis on truth to the exclusion of unity leads to fracture after fracture.
- **R. C. Foster says,**
This prayer, in so far as it applied directly to the early Christians was fulfilled. The apostles stood up on the day of Pentecost an absolute unit in faith and love and in the declaration of a single, tremendous proclamation. The early preaching of the gospel would not have been powerful had it not been for this unity.

(22.) "I have given them the glory You gave Me, so they may be one as We are one.

- Jesus has passed along His **glory** to His followers so that **unity** can be realized.

(23.) I am in them and You are in Me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that You sent Me and that You love them as much as You love Me.

- Jesus wants more than a elementary unity, He is seeking a perfect unity to convince **the world** of God's **love**.

(24.) Father, I want these whom You have given Me to be with Me where I am. Then they can see all the glory You gave Me because You loved Me even before the world began!

- **Glory** reveals **love** and Jesus wants every believer to experience the **glory** of Jesus that expresses the **love** of the **Father** for Him since **before the world began**. So the **world** is not eternal, but **had** a beginning point.

- Jesus is anxious to show His original **glory** to the believers in heaven.

(25.) "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know You, but I do; and these disciples know You sent Me.

- Jesus affirms His perfect **knowledge** of the **Father** and the disciples **know** that the **Father** sent the Son.

(26.) I have revealed You to them, and I will continue to do so. Then Your love for Me will be in them, and I will be in them."

- Jesus was not finished making known the Father's **love** to His disciples. He wanted to impart the **love** He had received from the Father to His disciples.
- This writer prays each day that he will contribute to oneness among believers and never say or do things that harm the unity of the church. A discussion follows:

OBEDIENT VERSE 21

The church was opened to the public on the Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. In spite of intense opposition, the church grew in Jerusalem and Judea, then to Samaria and the Roman world. It became international. Over the centuries, the main-line churches drifted from their doctrinal base and began to oppress any who did not agree with their variation. But some suppressed congregations remained true to the pattern set forth by the Apostles of Jesus in Scripture. The small churches did not leave behind literature and all we know about them is what their enemies said. But they did exist in Europe and the United States. Clues to their existence have been included in the classic history *The Pilgrim Church* by E.H. Broadbent.

In the early 1800's a movement towards unity was launched in the United States as well as other nations. Most of the congregations wore the name Church of Christ or Christian Church. While considerably unity among congregations was achieved, internal problems arose, too. The most visible was the division over the use

of instruments in the church assembly. The division still exists, but is less severe. A few congregations even have one Sunday meeting using instruments and one without the instruments.

Among the Churches that use instruments, there is considerable growth. While some older congregations are closing their doors, new church planting is gaining momentum. In the Pacific Northwest, one of the church planting groups shows 25 new congregations currently being planted and they have a goal of planting 100 congregations. <https://thecea.org> I pray each day for these workers in the harvest field.

Unity with other believers should be a very high priority. This writer has tried. Some years back, a local ministerial association asked me to attend their meetings, so I did. Then they asked me to host one of their monthly meetings, so I did. Near the end of the meeting, I presented the visual aid that showed how to become a Christian, beginning with faith and ending with baptism into Christ. The meeting instantly turned into chaos with a number of attendees objecting and then leaving. Only Wayne, the Pentecostal preacher, would consider what I said. Shortly after the meeting he was relieved of his preaching job and entered the banking business, moving to another state.

I'm sure that the ministerial association continued to meet, but I was not informed, much less invited.

Efforts at Christian unity need to be balanced between being Biblical in teaching and being united with those with differing viewpoints. A great example of this is the *Peace on Earth Ministry* under the leadership of Victor Knowles II. <https://www.poeministries.org>

Their website reads:

**“We exist to make the prayer of Jesus in
John 17 an unavoidable issue in the church.”**

This writer sends subscriptions of the site's primary publication, *One Body*, to opinion-makers each month. Hopefully, this is a contribution to true oneness in the body.