

The Lord's Prayer; Part 1

The Lord Jesus has just partaken of the Passover Meal with His disciples. Judas is dismissed and Christ then institutes the Lord's Supper with the true disciples (for whom specifically is the table of our Lord). He is literally just hours from dying on the cross. While still in the Passover chamber, the Savior gives his teaching in John 14, promising the disciples that although He is going away, He is coming again. And then He extends the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. In John 14:31 Jesus says, "...Arise let us go hence." As the Lord now travels toward Jerusalem, He teaches the disciples of the vine and branches as seen at the outset of John 15. In my imagination, I see the Lord in His story-telling mode pointing to vineyards as He explains the inextricable connection that He would evermore have with His disciples. Then as chapter 15 ends and chapter 16 begins, He defines more thoroughly the work of the Holy Spirit. At the close of John 16 we see the Lord gives the imperative command to "...be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

As Christ and his disciples journey toward Jerusalem, He stops before crossing the Brook Cedron. In the Old Testament the brook is called Kidron. The name means "turbid, dusky, gloomy." It ran through a ravine just outside the city walls of Jerusalem. It is the brook that David crossed while vacating the throne during Absalom's rebellion. After Jesus crossed the brook, He went to the Garden of Gethsemane where He prayed, "...not My will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Gethsemane was a garden spot; we perceive it was a place that was heavily wooded and the sky obscured. We see our Lord sweating His precious blood with His head bowed, tears falling to the earth. But before He goes into the garden in agony, I see Him stopping in an open field and lifting His eyes into the deep beautiful star-filled, moonlit night. No foliage or wooded garden will be restricting His view of the universe above Him that He created. Perhaps the Lord is looking to the sides of the north, which the Bible pinpoints as Heaven's present state (Psalm 48:2), the throne of God. And so begins our Lord praying the most mysterious and yet most marvelous prayer recorded in the Bible: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said..." (John 17:1a).

There are three phases to this prayer:

- (1) The Lord prays for Himself (John 17:1-5).
- (2) The Lord prays for the disciples (John 17:6-19).
- (3) The Lord prays for the disciples yet to be (John 17:20-26).

The Lord Jesus now enters into "...the secret place of the Most High..." (Psalm 91:1b). We feel unworthy to be here. We are tempted to take off our shoes, for surely, we are on holiest of ground. What a privilege to be able to hear our Lord praying to the Father. It is a prayer that has been very near to many of God's dedicated people throughout the centuries. John Knox, the great Scottish reformer lay dying. He requested to hear certain Psalms read that he particularly loved – and then he wanted to have read Isaiah 53. "But most of all – " he said "

– please read John 17, because that is the place where I first cast my anchor.” It was John 17 that God used to bring the great John Knox to salvation. In my own life I have resorted to John 17 again and again and I always come away having been refreshed. May God also give you that blessed refreshing and reviving.

I. THE LORD PRAYS FOR HIMSELF (John 17:1-5)

John 17:1-5

A. Demarcation (verse 1)

A succinct definition of “the glory of God,” is “the display of God.” Christ is petitioning the Heavenly Father to place Him on display. And the purpose is found in the Lord’s words of John 12:32: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

John 17 is referred to as “the high priestly prayer” of Jesus. The lament of Job was spoken in Job 9:33: “Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, *that* might lay his hand upon us both.” The daysman is a mediator. Christ is stepping into the court of law and He steps up to say, “Lift Me up and I will place You (the Father) on display.”

B. Designation (verse 2)

In this verse the overwhelming power of God is designated to the Son. And then the Son determines to give the gift of eternal life to all who are given to Him by the Father (John 6:37). John 1:12: “But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name.”

C. Definition (verse 3)

Our Lord defines eternal life as a personal relationship with Him. We don’t have to wait until Heaven to sample Heaven. If we know Jesus, in a real sense, the moment we believe we enter His kingdom. Jesus said in Mark 1:15, “...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

D. Declaration (verse 4)

Jesus makes it plain; He has lived the perfect life. He did what we could have never done. Whenever the commandment said, “Thou shalt,” He did. Whenever the commandment said, “Thou shalt not,” He did not. Christ finished the work His Father gave Him, as confirmed in John 8:29: “And he that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.” And when He did have to die alone for our sins, He was able to say, “It is finished...” (John 19:30b).

E. Deification (verse 5)

When Christ speaks of the glory He had with the Father before the creation of the world He was declaring His Deity. Colossians 1:16, 17: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible

and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

II. THE LORD PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES (John 17:6-19)

A. Present (verse 6)

The believers are the love gift from the Father to the Son. There is a loving interconnection in the Personalities of the Trinity. I John 5:7: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” In the case of some religions there is one personality of a tyrannical, uncaring god. When this god is by himself there is no love to be offered or to be received. Therefore he has no love to give his followers. In contrast, we see the infinite love of God in this beautiful chapter showing us that God was loving within the Holy Trinity long before mankind or this world was even created. This is seen in the last words of this great prayer, “...that the love wherewith thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26c).

B. Proof (verses 7, 8)

John 6:63. These verses remind us of the life-changing quality of the Word of God.

C. Priest (verses 9, 10)

What a privilege to know that Christ our High Priest prays for us. It is a terrifying thought to think that a person can reject Christ and His offer of salvation and get to the point that he or she is no longer prayed for. Genesis 6:3; Proverbs 29:1; Matthew 11:23; Proverbs 1:22-33; Hebrews 10:31.

D. Preserved (verses 11,12)

I Thessalonians 5:23; II Timothy 1:12; Jude, verse 24.

E. Pleasure (verse 13)

Psalm 16:11

Samuel Rutherford spoke much about the “beatific vision”, which is the vision of Christ in glory. Two hundred years later a dear Scottish pastor’s wife named Anne Cousins wrote a hymn, a poem based on Rutherford’s words in 1854 and the title of it was “The Last Words of Samuel Rutherford”. It was based on the “sehnsucht”, (deep yearning and longing) for the person of Christ whom he had loved without seeing for all those many years. The hymn was re-named “The Sands of Time are Sinking”. It has 19 verses. This is my favorite one that reminds all who know and love the Lord Jesus, what divine pleasure we have to look forward to:

The Bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear Bridegroom’s face;

I will not gaze at glory
But on my King of grace;
Not at the crown He giveth
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land.

-Pastor Pope-