

Jesus' Prayer
John 17:1-26
Steve Mood

Introduction

As we have grown in our faith, we are typically called to do a few things: (1) Read and study the Bible, (2) Be faithful in attending church and worshiping corporally, (3) Be discipled, (4) Serve others, (5) Be a witness, and (6) Pray.

A survey was recently done asking Christians about their prayer habits. The first question asked was *“How often do you pray?”*

Another question was asked *“How long do you pray?”* I would encourage all of you to pray more often and for a longer period of time.

Last week Pastor Chris gave us an overview of prayer and focused on the Lord’s Prayer from Matt. 6:9-13. That section, I believe, is misnamed as the “The Lord’s Prayer” but should be “The Disciples Prayer,” for Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray. There are many times in the New Testament where it says Jesus prayed, but what examples do we have of Jesus’ actual prayers in the Bible? We have the following:

Matt. 11:25-26 *“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.* (Thanking God for His revelation)

John 11:41-42 *“Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.”* (Raising of Lazarus)

John 12:27-28 *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”* (After the triumphal entry)

Matt. 26:39 *“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”* (Garden of Gethsemane, repeated 3x)

Luke 23:34 *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”* (Cross #1)

Matt. 27:46 *“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Cross #2)

Luke 23:46 *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.* (Cross #3)

Seven times we see one or two sentences that Jesus prayed. When we come to John 17, what is called Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer, we have a whole chapter on Jesus specifically praying. Since

we are called to follow Jesus and be like Him, John 17 provides an extended prayer of Jesus: (1) Who he prayed for and (2) What he asked for them.

Lesson

Point 1: Jesus Prays for Himself (v1-5)

John 17:1-5 *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

Notice Jesus begins His prayer with an acknowledgment that “*the hour has come.*” All through His ministry Jesus spoke that His hour had not yet come; now it finally had come. He would soon be arrested, convicted, and crucified. He stated that He had accomplished the work that the Father had given Him and He had glorified the Father. And it was at that time that the Son of Man would be glorified (John 12:23).

He asked two things for Himself:

(1) *glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you* (v1)

Thayer’s Greek Lexicon states that “glorify” means “*to make renowned, render illustrious, to cause the dignity and worth of some person or thing to become manifest and acknowledged.*” In the New Testament it is used to describe the act of giving honor and praise to God.

Jesus was asking that He would be glorified by the Father so that He could glorify the Father Himself. When we seek our own glory, we are doing it at the expense of God’s glory, who deserves all glory. When Jesus made this request, it was not at the expense of the Father’s glory because the Son’s glory was the glorification of the Father:

Phil. 2:10-11 *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

When Jesus was asking for His glory back, He was not being selfish, for He had the completion of His mission in view: He would be lifted up for our sins, He would die paying the price for our sins, and then He would be resurrected after three days to show that the price for our sins had been made.

(2) *glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed* (v5)

The second request shows the awareness that Jesus existed with the Father before He became man. The glory He asked for and would receive from the Father after His death, burial,

resurrection, and ascension to heaven would be the glory that He had enjoyed in the Father's presence before creation and which Jesus had relinquished at the incarnation:

John 1:1-2 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*

Phil. 2:6-7 *though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

Rom. 8:34 *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

Point 2: Jesus Prays for the Disciples (v6-19)

John 17:6-9 *I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.*

Jesus' requests are also specifically for the disciples: those who had believed in Him and acknowledged His teaching was from God and is true, and that He had come from God. Notice that He is not praying for the world in these verses, that is those who belong to the fallen world.

(1) Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me (v11a)

Jesus is praying that they would be faithful to God, that they would be kept in the Father's name indicating His character and His power. He wanted them to persevere and continue to follow God, to learn, to grow, and to be conformed to the image of His Son. While I believe that once we are saved, we cannot lose our salvation, it is only by God working in our lives that we remain in His name, for left to ourselves we would never stay faithful to Him. As Rom. 8:34 says Jesus is still at God's right hand making intercession for us.

(2) that they may be one, even as we are one (v11b)

Not only are believers kept in His name, Jesus prays that they would be "one." This is not referring to the ecumenical church movement, but we as believers are kept in union with one another. Not only are we kept in Him, we are kept together. We are in union with Christ and we are in union with one another. This has actually been answered because everyone from the time of Pentecost onward is in union with Him and therefore in union with one another. We are all one body, though individually we are many parts.

(3) that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves (v13)

One of the fruits of the Spirit is “joy” and Jesus in this verse indicates that He was praying for the disciples to have His joy. Joy in a biblical sense is rooted in spiritual realities and not external circumstances. The joy that Jesus was praying for is that joy which He finds in the Father’s love and that is fully reproduced in the disciples’ hearts. Joy is possible no matter what happens in life for we are His children and He indwells us and we can be certain that nothing that happens in our lives is an accident, but is designed to help us grow and become more like Him.

(4) *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one*
(v15)

We live in a world that is evil and is dominated by Satan. **1 John 5:19** states that ***We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*** Note that the prayer that Jesus prayed was not to remove His disciples from the world, but to stay in the world, spreading the gospel, helping others, growing in love of the brethren, and being a shining light to the world. The specific request was for those who are in the world to be kept from the evil one. They were to stay strong, to not make compromises, to not forget who they were serving, to not forget who they were worshiping.

(5) *Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth...that they also may be sanctified in truth.*
(v17,19)

Sanctify means to make holy, to consecrate, to set apart. They are to be set apart for God. **1 Thess. 4:3** states ***For this is the will of God, your sanctification.*** Sanctification happens through the Word of God working in our lives; the truth that is poured into our souls; the truth that renews our minds, our thinking, and our lives. Sanctification is a process via the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot be sanctified without the Spirit’s help. We cannot make ourselves holy on our own, or by the things we do, or the rituals we perform, or the good deeds we do. We are only transformed by the power of the Spirit working through the Word of God.

Point 3: Jesus Prays for all Believers (v20-26)

John 17:20 *I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.*

Jesus moves on to His prayer requests for those who will believe in the future, but at that time were not believers. Jesus was even praying for us. After the disciples were sent into the world, many people believed, and many came to Jesus through their testimony and through God’s Word.

(1) *that they may all be one, just 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 have sent me ... that they may be one even as we are one... that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me* (v21-23)

Jesus desired the unity of His people, not just the disciples, but all believers. Notice that these verses indicate that the unity of God’s people would show the world that they could believe that Jesus had been sent by the Father. The love, concern, and compassion that believers have for one

another, would show a world that has so little of these items, would be the proof Jesus was not merely a great moral teacher, but truly God the Son, and He was sent by God the Father.

(2) *I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world* (v24)

Jesus desired not only that we would be “in” Him but that we would also be “with” Him. Is this your desire also? I can think no place in the whole universe that I would rather be than to be in Jesus’ physical presence and to see His glory that was His before the incarnation. For we know:

Phil. 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

(3) *I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them* (v26)

Jesus desired that the love of the Father that had sustained and strengthened Him would be in all believers. His love for us gives us strength to fulfill the mission that He has given us and to sustain us and provide the sustenance that we need in a hostile world.

Conclusion

Should we pray? Yes! We are commanded to pray and it produces results:

James 5:16 *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

But you may ask: What do I pray for? How do I pray? How do I even start. I am glad you asked, for you are about to enter the Prayer Bootcamp:

Prayer Bootcamp 101

1. Find a quiet place: a place away from the world, a place that the tension and the anxiety and the stress of your life is put aside for a period of time. Pastor Chuck Swindoll said in a podcast I listened to recently that the first thing they bought for their children was a desk, not to do homework, but to study God’s Word and to pray to God. It was a place they could go to commune with God.

2. Shut the door: whether this is literal or metaphorical, the purpose is to set our attention on the living God. This is something we do proactively so that we can shut out the world for the time we are in the Father’s presence.

3. Read the Bible: Get your mind attuned to God. Select a Psalm or another passage to read. Meditate upon it and let it sink into your soul. Don’t hurry for we are not in a race, but we are putting our whole attention upon the creator and sustainer of the universe.

4. Pray out loud: Really? Isn't that weird? What will people think if they heard me? No, it is not weird and if someone asked you could tell them why. The purpose in doing this is to remove distractions in prayer and focus our mind on one thing instead of a million things.

5. Pray Scripture: like **James 1:5** *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.* Say something like: “Lord, you said if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given him. Today, Lord, I need that wisdom.”

6. Sing spiritual songs: like **Col. 3:16** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.* A hymnal or chorus book can become a rich source of devotional material to enhance prayer time. R. C. Sproul had a hymnal on his desk and he would pull it out and sing a hymn to help him to get the proper perspective.

7. Write your prayers: For those who like journaling this is another way to focus us and keep a record of your prayer requests and also the answers we receive.

8. Use the acronym A.C.T.S to focus your prayers: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. I have found in my life that it is the best thing to make sure all of the aspects of prayer are covered:

(a) Adoration – We offer praise to God, we see the holiness of God, we acknowledge His attributes: love, power, sovereignty, mercy, judgment, presence, transcendence. We get our focus on God.

(b) Confession – This implies our humility, the restoration of our fellowship with God, and the sins that we have committed.

(c) Thanksgiving – Be specific and acknowledge what God has done for you and others, thanks that He is patient, that He has saved you, that He continues to love you...

(d) Supplication – We pray for ourselves, our family, our friends, what is going on in our lives. Make sure you only ask for specific things after you have done the first three items. Be specific and detailed.

9. Pray every day – Don't let a day pass that you have not talked to and prayed to the Creator of the universe who is also our Savior.

10. Pray throughout the day: God doesn't call us to pray just once a day, but all through the day. Sometimes they are short prayers like arrows we shoot up. I have a friend who while he is walking prays the whole time. It is his prayer walk for his neighborhood. Pray throughout every day of your life. **1 Thess. 5:16-18** *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

11. Be persistent – Remember the widow in Luke 18:1-8? **Luke 8:6-8** *And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.*

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" It is okay to pray for something more than once. Don't give up. Pray until you have an answer.

Let us stand to sing and I will close us in prayer after we are done.