

Jesus' prayer for believers

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[0 : 00] John 17, and I want to concentrate on verses following, verse 20. I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through your word, that they all may be one, even as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you have sent me.

This prayer is the climax to the teaching that Jesus gave in John chapters 13 to 16, often called the upper room discourse.

And the prayer itself, as I mentioned last week, can be divided easily into three bits. The first five verses deal with Christ praying to God his Father.

In verses 6 to 19, he's dealing with praying to God his Father about the disciples. And finally, in verses 20 to 26, he's dealing with Christ and the church.

So first of all, let me go down the road of looking at the prayer for unity. I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they all may be one.

[1 : 25] Unity. Unity. If you look at these early band of disciples, they were in fact quite a motley crew.

We have Peter, arrogant, absolutely assured. When the chips are down, I'll be there. Only he wasn't.

Then there were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, whom Jesus called the sons of thunder. You could hear them a mile off.

They were bold, they were brash. And if you rubbed them up the wrong way, they'd soon let you know. And another one. Simon the Zealot.

He was part of the underground movement to remove the Romans from Judea. In practical terms and in modern speak, we'd have called him a terrorist.

[2 : 26] And Jesus is saying, they all may be one. This comes out in verse 9.

I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are thine. All mine are yours.

Yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. This is often referred to as the high priestly prayer of Jesus.

And the type of that is in Leviticus chapter 16, where the high priest prayed. But he didn't pray for any other people than the sons of Israel.

So, here we have it here. I am praying for them. So, this prayer has its roots, as we saw last week with sanctification, in the doctrine of election.

[3 : 34] I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me. Now, I made the point last week that early on in this gospel, this truth of the doctrine of election is to be seen, and we are to rejoice in it.

All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and him who comes to me I will not cast out. To briefly go into a lighter mode, you know that now, once a year, I give ministry in the Isle of Call.

Well, 30 years ago, when I was there, the Free Church had communion once a year. And they had what was called a communion season.

In the communion season, a visiting minister is invited to come. And the services start the previous Thursday, and they go on to the High Point on Sunday morning when they have communion.

And in the evening, the preacher took this text. All that the Father gives to me will come to me. Him who comes to me I will not cast out.

[4 : 59] And he said that the subject was, who are the elect? And I have to tell you plainly that after 45 minutes of listening to this, neither I nor any person who listened to it had the foggiest idea.

So this is where we come with this statement, I am not praying for the world.

There are instances where Jesus does pray for all. One of these was hanging on the cross, Luke 23, 34, Father, Father, forgive them.

They do not know what they are doing. So, there is a sense in which, yes, this prayer is for those that are his.

And there's also another sense in which Jesus prays for all. Now, what's being talked about here, this unity, is a release of the unity that already exists between God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[6 : 28] So, we're talking about the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity. In that Godhead, there is perfect fellowship between all members of the Trinity.

And this very chapter speaks of Jesus and the Father being in him, and him being in the Father, and the way that this harmony and glory is brought about is by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

in verse 5, And now, Father, you glorify me in your own presence with the glory which I had with you before the world was.

So, there is a fellowship that is unbroken. There is a unity of worship, a unity of purpose. And we are encouraged to pray for this, not just that we might be one, but for evangelism, that the world may believe.

Now, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle says this, with all lawliness and meekness and patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[7 : 56] And what he's talking about is how to fulfill the prayer of Jesus on the unity of believers. Now, in the verses that follow that, he gives you a sevenfold unity in these words.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all who is above all and through all and in us all.

A sevenfold unity. And that unity we are sought to pray for. We have that unity in Christ.

Are there anything that can spoil it? In the Epistle of Jude in the twelfth verse, the writer says, these are blemishes in your love feasts.

And what's he talking about? Well, to be sure, in the epistle of Jude, he's talking about false teachers. These are the ones who are causing blemishes in your love feasts.

[9 : 22] And what I say now, I say first to me because the preacher preaches first of all to himself before anyone else.

But it is the case, if we are being honest, that on occasions Christian people say things to one another that not only should they not have said, it should never have entered their heads to start with.

So if we are to go about the act of preserving unity and doing away with blemishes in our love feasts, what did Peter say?

How many times should I forgive them? Seven times. No, said Jesus. Seventy times. Seven. And if we want to maintain the unity, we have to, in our hearts, forgive.

That they all may be one, that the world may believe that you have sent me. Then there's a prayer for revelation.

[10 : 36] Verses 22, 23. The glory which you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be perfectly one, that the world may know that you have sent me and has loved them even as you have loved me.

So now we've moved on from, we've still got the subject of unity in our minds, but Jesus is now talking about a prayer for the revelation of the glory of God.

verse 22. The glory which you have given me, I have given to them. And in verse 5, right at the beginning, and now, Father, glorify you and me in your own presence, the glory which I had with you before the world was.

prayer for the revelation of the glory of God. Now the Greek word *doxa*, which is translated here, glory, can mean splendor, grandeur, can also mean the revealed presence of God or God himself.

So if we take it that what he's talking about is the revealed presence of God, how are we to get that presence, that glory, that revelation?

[12 : 15] In the first instance, the answer is by the incarnation. In John chapter 1, we read, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Verse 14. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We have beheld his glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father.

So John is writing here biographically. We beheld his glory. And the privilege of these early disciples was that they could see it for themselves.

But here, at this critical time in our Lord's ministry, just prior to his crucifixion, he's praying again that such a revelation might be given so that their faith might be reinforced.

Now, for the early disciples, as I've said, this took place by reason of the revelation in the incarnation. We have beheld his glory.

[13 : 36] When we looked at Jesus, we saw something that we'd never seen in any other person, the revealed presence of God.

And it is not the case that John goes on and says he was full of grace and truth. We read that the law was given through Moses, but only grace came through Jesus Christ.

Let me develop this another way. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. In that statement, we look at this verb translated dwelt.

The Greek verb literally means to live in a tent. And some versions would translate it as he was tabernacled amongst us, referring back to the tabernacle of the Old Testament or the tent of meeting.

Now, in the book of Exodus, we read this. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would ascend and stand at the door of the tent and the Lord would speak with Moses.

[15 : 07] In other words, the tabernacle is the place where at that time the revealed presence of God was to be seen.

In the disciples' case, the revealed presence of God is to be seen in the incarnation.

Now, is it different for us? Well, yes it is because we can't see the Lord Jesus Christ with the naked eye. What we can do, though, is to turn to God's Word, the inspired Word of God.

God gives us a revelation of His presence. J.B. Phillips, who was one of the first to come along with new versions of the New Testament starting in 1944, afterwards wrote a book called *The Ring of Truth*, a translator's testimony, in which he was surprised beyond all measure when he started to translate it was not a dead letter.

It's a living truth. And you don't have to be able to read Drake to find that out. All you have to do is to read the English printed page and there is a revelation of the glory of God.

[16 : 48] The two who went to Emmaus said, they said to each other, did not our hearts burn within us while He opened to us the Scriptures?

And that is our privilege this morning as we open the Scriptures and see what God is saying. our hearts should and will burn with a zeal for more.

Let me bring this to a conclusion by looking at the prayer for preservation. I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world.

A prayer for preservation also seen in verse 11. Now I am no more in the world but they are in the world and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given me that they may be one even as we are one. And then He goes on.

[18 : 02] While I was with them I kept them in your name which you have given me. I guarded them and none of them is lost but the son of perdition that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

So here Jesus is saying in His prayer to God He has guarded and kept the disciples and the only one that's been lost is Judas the son of Iscariotus that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

So how is it that Jesus has done this? He's done it through His own presence. All the time He was with the disciples. He was with them when their moods were up.

He was with them when their moods were down. And as an example of this I want to turn to the denial of Simon Peter. Now early in John's Gospel he makes this confession.

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

[19 : 23] In Matthew's Gospel at Caesarea Philippi he says you are the Christ the Son of the living God. These are Peter's confessions.

Very soon they'd be denied. In Matthew's Gospel a maid comes to him and says you also were with Jesus the Galilean.

What's he say? I do not know what you mean. A little later on I do not know the man. Finally he began to invoke a curse on himself and swear I do not know the man.

Now with this final saying two things happened. The first thing that happened was that the cock crowed as Jesus predicted it would.

And according to Luke 22 61 at this moment Jesus turned and looked at Peter. He saw him at the moment of his failure.

[20 : 41] He went out and wept bitterly. What could now be done about this situation? In the Gospel of Luke Jesus foreseeing this was going to happen says in verses 31 and 32 Simon Simon behold Satan has demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail and when you have turned again strengthen your brothers.

Now here the curtain is swept aside and we're given to see something of the antics of Satan. What is it Satan is saying?

He demands your surrender that he might make your life rubbish but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail and when you have turned again strengthen your brothers.

This is the remedy for the situation. It's the remedy for us at those moments when I like everyone else have failed the Lord at one point or another.

So this prayer that we're looking at here is a prayer that is full of good doctrine and teaching but it's fundamentally practical because it doesn't meet us at the point where we think we should be but at the point where we actually are.

[22 : 26] And in 2 Timothy just written before his death the apostle says this I know whom I have believed and he is able to keep unto that day everything I have committed to him.

Able to keep. what about all the problems that Paul the apostle had? Threats of death threats of being stoned persecuted by fellow believers.

I know whom I have believed. We may rely on this practical prayer of Jesus to encourage us to reinforce our faith in the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The last epistle written by Jude who was one of Jesus' brothers he concludes it by saying this now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory majesty dominion and authority before all time and now and forever.

Amen. So when we come to this prayer that Jesus makes a prayer for unity a prayer for revelation and a prayer for preservation it comes right down into our personal experience peace.

[24 : 20] And all we have to do is not only to say Amen but to apply it to our hearts and lives.

Amen. The Fandom singer closing hymn. food rose from the three DONOGE