

“THE HOUR IS COME”

John 17:1

(This is the first of a series I started, but did not finish due to surgeries.)

Intro: There are many things that can be said about the significant place that John 17 occupies, not only by its place in the Gospel of John, but also in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth. Some have said that it comes right after the greatest sermon ever preached and in itself is the greatest prayer that was ever prayed. And it comes between our Lord's last extended ministry to His disciples, and just before our Lord was to accomplish the greatest work that was ever done.

We can say that it was the greatest prayer that was ever prayed because it is *our Lord's prayer*. We have other references to the fact that our Lord prayed, and some brief accounts of the words that He prayed, but nothing of the length and detail of this prayer.

This is truly the Lord's prayer. We might take parts of it to incorporate into our prayers (and we should), but the only One Who could pray this prayer from start to finish is our Lord Jesus Christ. The prayer in Matthew 6 and Luke 11 which we commonly refer to as *the Lord's prayer* is a prayer that He needed not to pray in its complete form. For example, He had no sins for which He had to seek forgiveness. So John 17 is *the Lord's prayer*; Matthew 6 and Luke 11 contain a model for *our* prayers. We can see that the Lord made this very clear because it is recorded in Matt. 6:9 that He said, “After this manner therefore pray ye”!

It seems to be generally recognized by dependable commentators that this prayer in John 17 is important for another reason. It gives us an idea of how the Lord prays for us as He is seated at the Father's right hand in heaven. The writer of Hebrews tells us this about our Lord's present ministry in heaven:

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25).

This is not to say that the Lord does not mention other things, but the content of John 17 tells us what our Lord's major concerns for those of us who are His people. So it is very proper to speak of this prayer as *our Lord's high priestly prayer*.

There is also lessons here for all who teach the Word. We pray before we teach, and we should, but our Lord indicates by the place this prayer has in the Gospel of John, that we should pray after we have taught. We need “to

water our preaching with our prayers.” To do so is surely to see greater fruit from what we teach. But the prayer comes also just before the work that the Lord had come to heaven to do. And so it is fitting that we also should pray before any ministry that we undertake as the Lord’s servants. It may be a ministry just to one person, or to the members of our family, or to any group, large or small, where we are seeking to serve the Lord in any way. The most faithful service that we can render to the Lord combines the Word and prayer, and that is very clear at this late point in the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I trust that during the weeks we will be considering this prayer in John 17 that we will read and re-read it as many times as we can, the more the better, and that it will also be the subject of our meditation continually as we seek to gain as much benefit from it as the Spirit of God is willing to give us.

We begin with verse 1:

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee (John 17:1).

Note first, if you will,

I. THE APOSTLE JOHN’S INTRODUCTORY WORDS.

He said, “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said.”

It seems best to take those first four words to refer to what the Lord had been saying to His disciples in the preceding chapters, especially 14, 15, and 16, but also it would include what He had to say in John 13.

Have you ever thought to praise God that we have in the Gospel a record of the very words which our Lord Jesus Christ spoke while He was here on earth? We don’t have to guess about what He said; *we know!* All of His words are important, but if any words could be more important than others it would have to be His final words. At this point the disciples did not fully understand what the Lord had been telling them about His death, but what they did understand was troubling to them. And so He told them that even though He was going away, He was going to prepare a place for them. And then He promised that He would return to take them to be where He was.

However, He was not going to leave them alone. He was going to send the Holy Spirit to them from the Father to be with them forever, to be their Teacher Who would guide them into the truth and to keep them reminded of the things that the Lord had taught them during His time with them on the earth.

He comforted them by speaking of the intimate relationship they would have with Him even though He was going away. He was the vine, they were the branches, and the Father was the Vinedresser Who would carefully preserve that relationship so that there would be fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. And the Lord spoke of their responsibility to obey His commandments that their prayers might be answered and that they might continue to experience fullness of joy.

The Lord had warned them concerning the world, and that they would experience the hatred of the world just as He had. They were to expect persecution and opposition. But along with opposition from the world the Lord assured them that the Holy Spirit would use them to bring conviction and salvation to many in the world. He repeated His promises concerning prayer, and then concluded with the words we find in John 16:32-22.
(Read.)

I have just briefly surveyed what the Lord said. It would be good for all of us to read them again, and frequently. They are not the words of the Apostle John. They are not just the words which the Apostle John *thought* that the Lord said. Long after these words were spoken to the small group of whom John was a part, the Holy Spirit brought those words back to the mind and heart of the Apostle John so that what we have in these chapters is like a written out report of what the Lord said just like it had been taken down on a tape recorder.

And we can be sure that the Lord said all that He intended to say, all that the disciples needed to hear at that particular time. And the words which our Lord spoke were not only for the disciples, but they are for us, and will be for all of the Lord's people until the Lord returns.

Think much about those words, "These words spake Jesus." They are exactly what our Lord said. They are true words. They are living and powerful words. And they stand today with all of the other recorded words of our Lord for our instruction, and comfort, and warning.

But this is not all that the Apostle John said to introduce this prayer. He

followed it with what the Lord did at this point: “And lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said.”

— At this point the Lord continued to speak, but not to the disciples, but to the One He addressed as “Father.” And not only was the Lord continuing to use His mouth, but also His eyes. He turned His eyes from the disciples to whom He had been speaking, and turned them heavenward toward God.

Prayer is to be addressed to God. Although the Lord Jesus was on earth, and God the Father was in heaven, there was not a moment from the time of our Lord’s conception in the womb of the virgin Mary to this moment in which He was beginning to pray again that He had been cut off from the Father.

Now we never read of our Lord praying *with* His disciples. Whether or not they overheard the Lord praying, we cannot say. I doubt if they did. That would not be necessary for us to have an accurate record of what the Lord said when He prayed. I am rather inclined to think that the disciples heard all that the Lord said in John 14, 15, and 16, but that our Lord’s words were withheld from the disciples at the time when He prayed this prayer. I don’t know that we can settle this question one way or the other. This was not His prayer in Gethsemane because John 18:1 tells us about the Lord going across the Kidron to “a garden,” which was Gethsemane.

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But one thing we can be sure of, and that is that this is one way to address God. The Lord probably was out in the open air where He could turn His eyes to the heavens much like the Psalmist did when he spoke the words we find in Psalm 123:

Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

— Then in this first verse we come to:

II. THE WORDS WITH WHICH OUR LORD BEGAN HIS

PRAYER (John 17:1b).

These are his first words: “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify Thee.”

Isn't it both wonderful and amazing that the Lord address God in the same way that He taught His disciples to address God? What a word of affection! What a word of hope! What a word of dependence! “Father”! The next time that you and I pray, and we use this title for God, we need to stop and think of what it means to us to be able to come to God just like the Lord Jesus did. What comfort there is in this!

Later on in John's Gospel we read of Mary Magdalene and her first meeting with our Lord after His resurrection. She had wept because she could not find His body. But she did better than that: she found Him! And she did not want to let Him go. But He said this to her:

Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God (John 20:17).

Could He have said anything more wonderful to her? You and I share with our Lord Jesus Christ the relationship He has always had with God. He is our Lord's Father, and our Father, and He is our Lord's God, and our God!

But what did the Lord Jesus say to the Father?

This is a good place to point out that in the first five verses of this prayer the Lord was praying for Himself. Then from verse 6 through 19 the Lord prayed for those who were His disciples at that time. And then beginning with verse 20 and going to the end of the prayer He was praying for all who would believe in Him, and so we are included.

But what did the Lord say to the Father about Himself?

The first thing was this: “Father, the hour is come.!”

Repeatedly in the Gospel of John, John has reminded us that His hour had not yet come. Cf. John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32.

But now the Lord said to His Father, “Father, the hour is come.” He was speaking of that hour which had been ordained by the Godhead from before time began. That hour in which He would be “the Lamb slain from

the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). That hour in which He would take upon Himself the sins of all those whom the Father had given to Him. The hour in which salvation would be purchased and secured for all who ever had believed the promise of salvation through Christ, and for all who ever would believe. At last, in the providence of God, “the hour had come.”

Things work according to God’s timing, and not according to ours. How wonderful are those words of the Apostle Paul in Gal. 4:4-5:

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth
his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,
5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might
receive the adoption of sons.

“Father, the hour is come.”

But what did He want the Father to do? “Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.” What did the Lord seek when He prayed that He might be glorified?

Well, there are probably many answers to that question, but for God to be glorified, and for Christ to be glorified, means that they are to be revealed as Who and What They are. All through our Lord’s life on earth His glory had been revealed. And yet to some it was made known. Remember what the Apostle John wrote in John 1:14:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we
beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)
full of grace and truth.

And let me add to that what we read in John 1:18:

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which
is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

We read also the following words in 2 Cor. 4:6:

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath
shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory
of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Christ longed to be glorified that He might glorify the Father. He longed that men would know Who He was in order that, in turn, they might see the glory of God. The glory of God is the revelation of God, that the veil might be removed from the eyes of God’s people that they might see that the Lord Jesus Christ is more than a Man. He is God in human flesh, Who came to take away the sins of the world.

In true humility, the Lord Jesus did not just want this for Himself, but, as must be the case with all true prayer, He sought preeminently the glory of the Father.

— **Concl:** Thus, we truly stand upon holy ground. We have the privilege of knowing what He desired from the Father, His glory, in order that He might bring glory to God, His Father.

We have had a similar passage in the Sermon on the Mount where the Lord was speaking to His disciples about loving their enemies, etc. And the reason is given in Matt. 5:45:

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

And then our Lord added in Matt. 5:48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

When people see the glory of Jesus Christ, and realize that it is the glory of God, that there is no difference between the glory of the Son and the glory of the Father, then they are awakened by the Spirit to see their own terrible corruption in the light of His unspeakable glory, and they will be turned to Christ that they might be saved.

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This verse is only a beginning. May the Lord enable us to understand what we have seen tonight, and prepare us for the great things that are to come as we make our way through this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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THE PRAYER OUR LORD PRAYED

John 17

Introductory Message

Intro: I want to start tonight what I tried to start on June 14 in the evening, but was unable to continue because of the surgeries I had. Hopefully this time I will be able to complete the series.

I am going to ask you to do something for the Lord, and for yourselves, and for me. I am asking you to read through this prayer at least once every week, and more if you can work it into your schedule. Blessings come to us by reading and re-reading the Word of God which cannot be received in any other way. Many of you have heard me refer to what D. L. Moody said when he was asked on one occasion what was the greatest spiritual experience he ever had. He responded immediately by saying that it was the month that he read the book of Ephesians through *forty-seven times!* G. Campbell Morgan, who was Martyn Lloyd-Jones' predecessor, used to read a whole book of the Bible forty times before he ever started to make notes. TV and the fast pace of our lives today keep us from reading the Bible like people have in past days, but we need to get back to reading and re-reading particular portions of Scripture. And most of us can do this along with our regular Bible reading. We don't want to read less as the years go by, but we need to read more. The dividends of such reading will prove to us that it is a very profitable habit to have. You young people should begin now to do a lot of Bible reading. It is way to go to find great spiritual blessings. Nothing could be more encouraging to me than to learn that many of you are regularly reading the passages of Scripture that we are covering in our services. That goes for the Sermon on the Mount, but a good place to start is with John 17 just for the simple fact that it is one chapter.

But let me point out another very obvious fact about John 17. It is a prayer. It is a prayer that our Lord prayed almost 2,000 years ago. The fact that He prayed it, gives it special importance. It is wonderful to know how He prayed. We have many records in the Gospels of times when our Lord prayed, but this is by far the longest of our Lord's prayers to be recorded in Scripture. As I mentioned last June when I tried to start this series, this prayer gives us an indication as to how the Lord is probably praying today at the right hand of the Father. So it becomes a very important prayer for many reasons.

However, one reason that none of us should miss, is the message that it

has for us. Many have stated it this way, or in words similar to these: "If our Lord prayed, and needed to pray as a Man on earth, how much more should we feel our need to pray."

Just this past week, reading in the Gospel of Luke, I came across that passage where the Lord, faced with increasing opposition from the scribes and Pharisees, did this:

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12).

With conditions as they are today, it might be a dangerous thing for us to spend a night in the mountains to pray, but we can certainly find a safe place where we can do what the Lord did – possibly in some room in our own homes.

But it is quite amazing, isn't it, that our Lord, the Son of God, to Whom prayer can rightly be made, would be such a Man of prayer. Let us seek to learn all that we can from John 17 that will help us in our own praying.

Let me point out another practical point from which all of us can profit. Our Lord was, as the Gospels clearly indicate, a Preacher – a great preacher, the greatest of all preachers. We have one of His greatest messages, if not the greatest, in the chapters of John which lead up to John 17. I am referring to John 14, 15, and 16. *And this prayer follows!* This prayer teaches us that we need to pray *after* we have taught. We need to follow our preaching and teaching with our praying. If we faithfully did this, we probably would see more results from our teaching.

Now this applies not only to those of you who speak in our services from time to time, but for you parents who are teaching your children at home. Teach, and then pray. Instruct your children in the Word of God, and then pray your teaching into their hearts. Spurgeon used to say that the greatest preaching was done where there was a congregation of only one! So if we are just talking about the Word in a casual way with some friend, the place of John 17 in the Bible instructs us to follow our teaching with prayer. We could not possibly have a great example of this than our Lord Jesus Christ. You can tell from the prayers of the Apostles which are recorded for us in Scripture, that this was their practice. And from whom would they have learned this? From the OT patriarchs and prophets. But mainly they must have learned this from the Lord.

As we go through the prayer we will see also that, in many respects, this was a prayer which only our Lord could pray (and that is why we rightly

call it, *the Lord's prayer*, yet we can learn from it certain features that need to be incorporated into our prayers.

When we are studying a chapter, or a whole book, the first object that we ought to have is getting an overall picture of whatever portion of Scripture we are studying. I have told many of you that one point that Dr. Charles Feinberg often made with us in class, was that we are not really grasping the message of a book of the Bible (and the same would apply to a chapter) *until we can think our way through it*. You will often find that in reading and re-reading any portion of Scripture, much of it is being committed to memory. That is something for all of us to consider with John 17. However, even though you may not actually sit down to memorize, by reading it over and over you will find that that is what you are actually doing.

So I bring you these thoughts to stimulate your interest in John 17 so that our consideration of this chapter will be more profitable to each one of you than if you were just to come to sit and listen to me each Sunday night. My object is not to show you how much I know (because there is always much more for me to learn). My object is to get the Word into your hearts so that it will have its effect in your lives. And I want that objective for myself as well.

In our recent study of the Model Prayer which our Lord gave to His disciples, we learned that the Lord taught His disciples to address God as their Father when they prayed.. This is a very important part of prayer. And so let me call your attention to how the Lord addressed God when He prayed.

I. HOW THE LORD ADDRESSED GOD IN PRAYER.

Here we need to look at six verses in this prayer: vv. 1, 5, 11, 21, 24, and 25. In verse 1 our Lord said, "Father"; in verse 5, "Father" again; in verse 11, "Holy Father"; in verse 21, "Father"; in verse 24, "Father"; and in verse 25, "righteous Father."

In the Model Prayer the Lord taught His disciples to call God their Father. Do you mean that we can address God exactly as our Lord Jesus Christ did, the eternal Son of the living God? Yes, as amazing as it seems, we have that privilege. And what was the greatest confirmation of this is to be found in the words that the Lord spoke to Mary Magdalene when He spoke to her after His resurrection. She evidently was holding on to the

Lord so that she would not lose Him again. And this is what He said to her. The words are found in John 20:17:

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Our acceptance with the Father, again, as amazing as it seems, is equal to that which our Lord Jesus Christ has. God was His Father; He is our Father because we are in Christ. What tenderness there is in this term. And evidently of all of the titles we could rightly give to God, nothing pleases Him more than to say, "Our Father," or simply, "Father."

But in these days when so many have lost sight of the glory of God and the glory of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, we must be careful not to take the privilege of calling God our Father as a way of bringing God down to our level, causing us to treat God with a familiarity which is really blasphemous. He is our infinitely Holy Father, and our infinitely Righteous Father, and we must always approach Him with a sense of His greatness and glory, and with humility that He would deal with us in such infinite grace.

I believe it is very important for us to notice this about our Lord's relationship to God. One time our Lord spoke of God as "the only true God," but this was more as a description of the Father than a way of addressing Him. However, this also is a perfectly right way to address God since He is our God as well as our heavenly Father.

Now probably the best thing I could do tonight would be to lead us in a closing word of prayer, and ask you to go home and begin to work on John 17 until you see the major divisions of the prayer. But I won't do that. Instead, I will try to point out what I believe are the main divisions, and then you can from your own reading and study, decide whether or not you think I am right.

Actually I am not going to give you an original outline. I am going to give you divisions which many have seen in this prayer, and that is one reason I feel that you will probably agree with me.

II. THE OUTLINE OF THE PRAYER.

This past Friday I took Lucille out to the Gresham Clinic where Lucille had an appointment with Dr. Lin. While we were waiting, I picked up a

Bible that was there in the waiting room, turned to John 17, and found a brief outline printed right along with the text of Scripture. It had three points, the three points which so many expositors have recognized. Let me give them to you:

- I. Our Lord prayed for Himself.
- II. Our Lord prayed for His disciples.
- III. Our Lord prayed for all believers.

The text for the first point is verses 1-5. The text for the second point is verses 6-19. The text for the third point is verses 20-26. There are some parts of the latter part of the prayer that would apply to our Lord's disciples, too, but as an overall, general division of the prayer, I think that you will find that these were the three areas that our Lord was concerned about. We will see more about this as we go along.

Now to conclude our study tonight I want us to look at the requests that Lord Jesus brought to His Father, and our Father, in prayer, most of which directly involve us.

III. THE REQUESTS OUR LORD BROUGHT TO THE FATHER.

First, for Himself, note the Lord's request in v. 1. The same request is made in v. 5 with some important details added.

In the second section where the Lord was praying for His disciples, we have the request found in v. 11, the second part.

In the same section it seems that verse 13 should also be considered as a request.

And then look at verse 15. In verse 17 we have the final request for this second section.

In the third section where the Lord was praying for all disciples, we see two requests given in verses 20 and 21. This continues down through verse 23.

One of the greatest requests of the entire prayer is the one we find in verse 24.

And then if we consider verse 13 a request, it seems to me that we need to consider verse 26 a request.

Concl: Back in the late 1700's and early 1800's there lived a man in Scotland who had the very ordinary name of John Brown. He was an outstanding preacher in Edinburgh. He authored a number of books, one of them was on John 17. Many of his statements are priceless as he described the rich truth found in this chapter and prayer. Let me close tonight by giving you just a sample of the way he felt about this, our Lord's prayer:

We should never read or meditate on any of the declarations of the Word of God, without feeling that we are "on holy ground"; but here assuredly we are not only in the holy land, in the holy city, in the precincts of the temple, we are in the temple itself; nay, we are ... not only in the holy place, but in the holy of holies. We are called on to listen to the incarnate Son, telling his Father in heaven what he thought and what He desired in reference to the work in which the glory of God and the salvation of men were equally involved; to see Him, as it were, unveiling the hidden mysteries of wisdom and love in the economy of grace, disclosing the immeasurable vastness of its plans, and the infinity of the love which formed and executed them (pp. 2-3).

I trust that in the coming weeks we will not only see the glory of this matchless prayer, but that unfolded before our eyes will be the glory of our Lord and of the Father Whom the Son loved so much that He would give His life for the salvation of those whom the Father had given to Him.

OUR LORD'S PRAYER FOR HIMSELF

John 17:1-5

Intro: I trust that you remember that there are three sections to this prayer that our Lord prayed:

- I. Our Lord prayed for Himself (vv. 1-5).
- II. Our Lord prayed for His disciples (vv. 6-19).
- III. Our Lord prayed for all believers (vv. 20-26).

The only part of the chapter which the Lord did not say nor pray, is the first part of chapter 1: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, ..."

If we had been reading through the Gospel of John, we would have just concluded three chapters in which the Lord Jesus was speaking to His disciples. Now we come to a chapter where we also have the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, but here He was not speaking to His disciples, but about His disciples. And since He was speaking to God the Father, His words are a prayer – the longest prayer of our Lord to be recorded anywhere in the Scriptures.

"These words" – The Son was communicating to His Father in human language, and the Apostle John who wrote this Gospel would have us believe that these were the very words which our Lord spoke, not John's recollection of what the Lord said, not a mere summary, but the prayer just as the Lord spoke the words which are recorded for us here.

And He called our Lord, "Jesus," just as he had called by that Name throughout this Gospel record. Inherent in that Name is the Deity of our Lord because it means *Jehovah is Savior*, or *Jehovah is salvation*. Others have carried that Name, but it uniquely belongs to our Lord because "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

At the same time the Name "Jesus" is an indication of our Lord's true and perfect humanity. And this is how we see Him as He spoke the words of this prayer to His Father Who was in heaven. Matthew Henry reminds us that the Lord assumed this same posture when He prayed at the tomb of Lazarus. Cf. John 11:38-45 (cf. v. 41). Many feel that lifting up the eyes to heaven was the equivalent of lifting up the soul to God. In Psa. 25:1 David wrote, "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." It is to God that we pray, and it is from God that we need to expect our answers. And as our Lord began to pray, as we noted last week, the first word to come from

His lips and from His heart, was "Father."

I. OUR LORD'S REQUEST FOR HIMSELF (John 17:1).

I spent quite a bit of time last week talking about this wonderful title, "Father." Our Lord used it in verses 1, 5, 11, 21, 24, and 25. To our Lord it was a term of endearment because it showed the relationship that He had eternally with the Father. This is brought out very clearly in verse 5. The Lord was not looking back just to the time before He became a Man, but He was looking back to the glory that He shared with the Father "before the world was." As difficult as it may be for us to comprehend it, there never was a time when God was not His Father, or when "Jesus" was not His Son. Creation did not change that. The incarnation did not change that. The only thing that the incarnation changed was that manifestation of the divine glory which our Lord had enjoyed with His Father.

But there was a new sense in which our Lord used this title for God when He came to the earth. It became for Him *a title of dependence*. Here again we must confess that we cannot plumb the depths of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ when by the miracle of the virgin birth He became a Man, but if our Lord's prayers indicate one important message it is that our Lord was utterly dependent upon the Father during His time here on earth. And as far as we are concerned, those of us who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, we share in all that the Lord experienced only in a much more limited way.

We are to use this title for God in prayer, "our Father," because it shows that we also are related to God in this way. We are in His family, not primarily because we chose to be, but because He chose us and sent His Son to redeem us, that we might become *by birth* members of His family. And just as we would address our earthly father with special affection, so that is to be true of our relationship with God, our Father. Oh, how we need to love Him! But I go on to point out that this is a title which we use for the one on earth upon whom we are absolutely dependent. How true this is of us when we come to God our Father. There is no need we have that cannot be brought to Him. He supplies all of our needs. He gives us the very breath that we breathe. He sustains us day by day. We need Him. We may be able to get along without all others, but we cannot get along without our heavenly Father.

But turning back to our Lord, I used to say that our Lord prayed, but that He didn't need to pray. I don't say that anymore. I believe He needed to

pray, or He would not have prayed. It was a part of His humiliation, and a part of the sympathy that He manifests toward us now, that by His incarnation He was brought to a place of dependence upon the Father. He Who had a major part in bringing the universe into being, became a Man and learned dependence upon the One Whom He called, "Father." If the Lord were not dependent upon His Father, then this prayer would only be a show. The Lord would never have expressed His dependence upon the Father unless His dependence had been real.

"The hour is come." These words signaled the arrival of the hour that both the Father and the Son had been anticipating from before the foundation of the world. Let us trace the Apostle John's use of this expression in his Gospel.

We find it first in what our Lord said to His mother at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. Cf. John 2:4. We see it again in John 7:6 and 8 where the word the Lord used was "time," and we have "hour" again in John 7:30. Look next at John 8:20. And then see the Lord's words in John 12:23 and 27. Then go on to John 13:1.

If we want evidence of the absolute sovereignty of God in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is found in these passages. How gladly our Lord's enemies would have killed Him months before they did, but that hour which had been appointed for our Lord to die overruled their evil plans. And when our Lord's enemies were successful in what they had wanted to do for a long time, Peter explained it this way when he was preaching in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost:

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it (Acts 2:22-24).

How important it is for us to realize that all things run according to the time or hour set by God, but that was especially true in the case of our Lord's life and death here on earth.

It is important for us to realize that our Lord was under no illusion as to what this "hour" would mean to Him. Gethsemane would show that. But still, and here we see how willingly our Lord faced His suffering and death, He requested that the Father would glorify Him, and mainly for one reason, "that Thy Son also may glorify Thee."

What was it that the Lord Jesus wanted? What did He mean by the words, "Glorify Thy Son."

The Lord was calling upon the Father to reveal in that hour which was immediately ahead of Him at this time that He was truly the Son of God, and that as the Son of God He would accomplish the work that He had been sent to do, a work which no mere man could possibly have done.

When the Lord Jesus became a human being, His glory was veiled. Paul described that for us in Philippians 2:5-8. Drawing of the baby Jesus show a halo about His head, but you can be sure that He appeared in the manger just like any other baby would have been. But there were glimpses of His glory in what the angels told the shepherds when they appeared to them. When the Lord Jesus was baptized, the Father spoke from heaven glorifying His Son. When the Lord took Peter and James and John into that mountain where He was transfigured before them, they saw His glory then, and both John and Peter wrote about it afterwards. Our Lord's miracles were designed to show His glory. The Apostle John tells us this in John 20:30 and 31. Even through the trial and death of our Lord there were those who saw glimpses of the glory of our Lord. Think of what the centurion said. Think also of Pilate's testimony, and the testimony of his wife. And what about Judas Iscariot? And what about the thief on the Cross?

We cannot possible appreciate the humiliation that our Lord experienced by being what Dr. Mitchell used to say, "a Man in the midst of men." Most people saw nothing more in Jesus than just a man. Some believed that He was a prophet. But only a few came to understand that He was truly the Son of God.

But now let me point this out: That which seems to have been uppermost in the mind of our Lord as He prayed this High Priestly prayer was what Paul tells us this in the opening verses of his epistle to the Romans:

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,
separated unto the gospel of God,

2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy

scriptures,)

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ
(Rom. 1:1-6)

The glory, the true nature of Jesus of Nazareth, was to some extent revealed in the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, but the greatest glory was in His resurrection from the dead. Others had been raised from the dead before, *but no one was ever raised from the dead like our Lord Jesus Christ. So much hinged on His resurrection. And even though we read in John 10 that our Lord had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it again, yet here in John 17 the Lord was petitioning the Father to make sure of His glorification. Eternal issues were involved! Why was our Lord's resurrection so important? We find the reason in verses 2 and 3 of this prayer.*

II. THE WORK THAT THE FATHER HAD GIVEN HIM TO DO (John 17:2-3).

The purpose behind the humiliation of Christ, from His birth to His death, was the salvation of the elect. The Greek word translated "power" is the word *authority*. We see here the sovereignty of God in salvation, and that sovereignty committed also by the Father to His Son, Jesus. It was determined by the Father Who would be saved, and He had already given them to His Son. We see that salvation was to be a gift, not a reward for some work that sinners might do. The Lord Jesus came to accomplish a finished work of salvation.

And what is eternal life?

It is to know the Father of Jesus as "the only true God," but also "Jesus Christ, whom" He "had sent." It means a personal acquaintance with God as "the only true God," and of "Jesus Christ," the God-Man Who came to offer Himself as a Substitute for those whom the Father had chosen. And the resurrection of Christ was absolutely essential. Without it, there would be no salvation.

Finally, in the last two words of our text we see that:

III. SALVATION, A WORK OF THE FATHER AND A WORK OF THE SON (John 17:4-5).

The Lord Jesus had glorified the Father on earth, and the work that the Father had given Him to do, was done. He had lived to reveal the Father. At this point the Lord repeated the request of verse 1 because no one can be saved apart from believing that Jesus is the Son of God, and that by His death He had done all that was necessary for the salvation of sinners.

When Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, He had put away our sins. Becoming a sacrifice for us had in no way changed our Lord so that He was less than what He had been with the Father "before the world was." And Christ's resurrection was proof that the Father was satisfied with the work of His Son so that both the Father and the Son are glorified in our salvation.

Concl: Much more could be said, but here we have the explanation as to why it was so important for the Father to glorify His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. On that glory rested the salvation of all whom the Father had chosen and given to His Son. What assurance is here for us, and what praise and glory should be in our hearts forever for God, our Father, and for His beloved Son, our Savior.

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST

John 17:1-5 – Part 2

Intro: In our study of John 17, our Lord's prayer, we have noticed how He addressed God. All through the prayer it is as His Father.

We have also noticed the three main divisions of the prayer:

- I. Our Lord prayer for Himself (vv. 1-5).
- II. Our Lord's prayer for His disciples, the twelve (vv. 6-19).
- III. Our Lord's prayer for all believers (vv. 20-26).

And we have singled out His specific requests. There is one in the first section (vv. 1, 5). There are three in the second section (vv. 11, 13, 17). And there are three more in the third section (vv. 20-21, going down through verse 23; and vv. 24, 26).

We considered all of that in my first message.

In the second message we considered our Lord's request for Himself, and then looked briefly at the three verses which joined the two times the Lord made His request for Himself. Verses 1 and 5 give us the request; verses 2-4 join the two times He made the request.

Tonight I want to return especially to verses 2-4 to examine them a little more closely than we did last Sunday. If you were here, I trust that you remember that the subject of *authority* came up, and we have that in the word "power" which we have in verse 2. It is the Greek word ἐξουσία. So let us begin by thinking about:

I. THE AUTHORITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

We know that before the Lord Jesus became a Man, He, as God, had unlimited authority. This is a power which is a part of the divine nature. The Three Persons of the Godhead have absolute authority in all things. No one is greater than They are. This speaks of the sovereignty of the Godhead. All other authorities, regardless of whether they are angelic, demonic, or human, are subject to the authority of the Godhead. The Lord God sought to demonstrate that to Nebuchadnezzar who was the greatest king of his day, and he came out of a most humiliating experience to say this:

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I

blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:34-35).

I don't give Nebuchadnezzar credit for knowing the doctrine of the Trinity, but what he said about God generally applied just as much to our Lord and to the Holy Spirit. Yet there is no conflict in attributing sovereignty to all Three Persons of the Godhead because They are One – not One in Person, but one in nature and one in purpose and will.

But here in John 17 the One Who is praying is the Son of God in human flesh, Christ incarnate. Now there are many things about the humanity of our Lord which are really beyond our full comprehension. But one thing we learn here from the lips of our Lord Jesus Himself is that in His flesh the Father delegated our Lord with full and absolute authority over all flesh. This means *all people*. It was the same authority that our Lord had before He became a Man, but it has special significance here as far as salvation is concerned. And this has always been a point which some Christians have had a difficult time accepting. They readily accept the authority of our Lord over nations, and over creation, but here the Lord Jesus was claiming to have authority, sovereign authority, in what we might call, *the dispensing of salvation*. Surely this forever settles the question as to whether or not our Lord is sovereign in salvation. And by that I mean sovereign in determining who is going to be saved. And yet even here we see the harmony between the Member of the Godhead because the Lord was given authority to give eternal life to those whom the Father had given to him. This statement means that the Father had not given all men to Christ for salvation, or this statement would have no meaning.

Cf. what our Lord said back in John 10, beginning with verse 27:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one (John 10:27-30).

When did the Father give the "sheep" to His Son? Well, we are going to

learn in our study of Ephesians on Tuesday that all of us who are saved were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). So this must mean that this gift of the Father for the Son was made before there was any creation at all. And the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ guarantees that *all* who were given to Him by the Father will without one exception be saved. In fact, again referring to John 10 we learn that this was the purpose in the death of Christ. He "gave His life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Here in one statement having to do with the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, He answered most of the questions that believers have had as to the Lord's place in salvation. He died for those whom the Father had given to Him. He seeks those whom the Father had given to Him. And, as I have said, without a single exception all those given to the Son by the Father in eternity past *will be saved*.

You and I don't know who is going to be saved, but that does not mean that the Lord doesn't know. How could He be omniscient if He did not know? It did not surprise Him when you were saved. He died for you, and He sought you, and saved you. And this is true of all the saved whether in OT times or NT times. There is only one Savior, and His Name is Jesus Christ.

So that behind our salvation is not only the death of Christ, but the sovereignty of Christ. And, as we learn from verses 1 and 5, our salvation brings glory to God and is dependent upon the glorification of the Son of God. That is what makes our Lord's requests in verses 1 and 5 so extremely important because the glorification of the Son would mean the resurrection of Christ, the completion of His work, and the Father's full acceptance of what our Lord accomplished by His death.

I will never forget when I was sitting years ago in a class on salvation taught by Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer at DTS, when he pointed out from Rom. 4:25 that our Lord was raised from the dead because He had accomplished everything necessary for our salvation. The Lord was glorified by His resurrection, by His ascension, and by the fact that He was seated, and still is, at the right hand of the Father.

After our service last Sunday night one of our men said to me that in this first section the Lord, although He prayed for Himself, was also praying for us. And that is right! Salvation is the big issue all through this prayer, and the work will not be completed until the request in verse 24 is finally

fulfilled for all of us.

Now let us go on to answer the question,

II. WHAT IS ETERNAL LIFE?

If divine authority from God the Father has been given to His Son so He could give eternal life to those whom the Father had given to Him, what does this mean?

Well, first we need to understand if eternal life comes from Jesus Christ as a gift, then no one has eternal life except those who have received it from the Lord Jesus Christ. There are not many ways to have eternal life; there is only one, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is also true that without eternal life we only have the prospect of eternal death. The Apostle John who outlived all of the other apostles, but who was intimately involved in the life and ministry of our Lord here on earth, wrote these words long after our Lord was back in heaven. They are found in 1 John 5:11-12:

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

So to have Christ is to have life, and to be without Christ is to be spiritually dead.

How did the Lord express it in His prayer. Look at verse 4. (Read.)

The Lord Jesus was speaking of a personal knowledge, a personal acquaintance with God and with His Son.

Remember that the Father has given His Son the authority, the absolute authority, to give eternal life to all whom He, the Father, had given to His Son. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Son to make sure that we come to understand that there is only one "true God," and that He sent His Son Jesus Christ for our salvation.

Let me remind you of what the Apostle Paul had to say about his own salvation. You will find these words in Gal. 1:11-16:

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was

preached of me is not after man.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Paul was thinking about His ministry to the Gentiles, but he said here how he was saved. Look at verse 15. Salvation came to the Apostle Paul in God's time when God called him by His grace, and revealed His Son in him. You see salvation is not a human work. Nor is salvation based upon human merit. Salvation is a work of God when we find ourselves learning about God and why He sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world, and we turn in faith to Christ, putting our hope of salvation in what He has done. From that moment on Jesus Christ is our life, and the possibility of our dying because of our sins is forever gone.

Now look at verse 4.

III. THE WORK OF THE SON (John 17:4).

I have been speaking about the death of Christ on the Cross, but up to this point in our Lord's prayer He has only spoken about His own glory, in verse 5 the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. But He had no specifically spoken of what He had done to guarantee the salvation of those whom the Father had given to Him. But here it is in verse 4. The Lord puts the glory of the Father first, and this must be our the first with us as well. But the work by which the Father was glorified was the work by which the penalty for our sins was paid in full, and our salvation guaranteed.

It all comes as a gift to us, but it cost our Lord His very life which He laid down for us.

But how does the Lord make Himself known to us, and how is it that we

come to know the Father? It is through the Word of God. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and the Gospel is found in this Book which the Lord has given us. We are born again by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. God reveals Himself through the Word, and that is where also we see the truth about the Lord Jesus. And as the truth of the Word is used by the Holy Spirit, we are brought to a personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ as our Savior, and then learn that being saved from our sins and the penalty of our sins, "the only true God" has become our heavenly Father.

Dr. Chafer used to tell us in the Seminary that when God is at work in a human heart, and we give them the message to believe, most often they will have trusted Christ before we encourage them to trust Him.

You can see by our Lord's prayer that He pictures a salvation to us that is truly a work of God. Eternal life means knowing God as "the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom" He, the Father, has sent.

Concl: When we think of our salvation, while we may be aware of all that took place with us, and who it was who told us about the Lord Jesus, yet from these words of our Lord let us never forget that long before we ever became concerned about our relationship with God, God had chosen us. Then He called us. And through His Word we believed because He gave us the faith. And we have been saved eternally – all to His glory!

He knew us before we knew Him. And He sought us that we might know Him and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The hymn: O Happy Day, but Philip Doddridge.

O happy day that fixed my choice
On Thee my Savior and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all above.

'Tis done: the great transactions done;
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

Let us be faithful in telling others the good news of salvation through

Christ, but as we do let us always remember that we are only the instruments which God uses, but only He can awaken sleeping sinners, and cause them to turn to God and to Christ.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF CHRIST

John 17:6-8

Intro: With these verses we begin the second main division of our Lord's prayer. Let me remind you of the three divisions:

In verses 1 through 5 we see how the Lord prayed for Himself. In verses 6 through 19 we see how the Lord prayed for His disciples, those who were His disciples at that time. In verses 20 through 26 the Lord prayed for all believers, even those who had not believed in Him, but who most certainly would.

As you know, this prayer is often referred to as our Lord's High Priestly prayer, and I certainly have no argument with that. But I wonder if we cannot also call this His prayer as the Prophet of God. That certainly is evident in verse 8 where He said, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me." This was the task of every prophet, both OT and NT. – to deliver the message of God to men.

And it seems to me that even what the Lord said in verse 6 is an indication of His prophetic office: "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." I say this because it was the business of the prophet, not only to give God's message to men, but even in his person, the prophet was to manifest God. And it is when you get these two aspects of the prophet's ministry together, that you have a powerful ministry. They meet to a perfect degree in our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the reason that I have entitled my message, *The Faithfulness of Christ*. There have been some great prophets in the past, but none has surpassed the Lord Jesus Christ in His faithfulness to God. He was totally faithful!

Let us think for just a moment about:

**I. THE MANIFESTATION OF THE NAME OF THE FATHER
(John 17:6).**

Our Lord had *made known* the Name of the Father. And He had done this in several ways. He had done it by His words, His teaching. He had done this by the miracles which He performed. But most of all He had done it in His Person. He told Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

But what did our Lord mean by His reference to the Name of God. God's

— Name to His people is "Father." And His Name stands for all that He is: His glory, His holiness, His eternal nature, His infinite wisdom, His love, His power. The Lord had made known all of the glorious attributes of God, His Father. The Apostle John said that he and the other disciples, in seeing the glory of our Lord, had seen His glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

All through the OT, beginning with the very first chapter of Genesis, we can begin learning about God. And the revelation there is wonderful. God has revealed Himself through His Word. But it was not until the Lord Jesus Christ came that the revelation was complete, or as complete as it would ever be here on earth. And here again we must recognize the perfect faithfulness of our Lord. That view of the Father which He was constantly giving, was never marred in any way. There was never anything about the Lord Jesus that was different from His Father. Jesus Christ will always be the most complete revelation of God the Father that we have. *And this certainly was one of the two main reasons that the Lord Jesus came to earth – to make the Father known.*

But to whom was this revelation made?

— With the exception of just a few of the scribes and Pharisees, it was not made to them. Masses of people came to the Lord for healing, but the Gospels do not indicate that there were great numbers of people who understood Who Jesus Christ was. No, it was not to all of the people who were living while the Lord was here on earth, but it was only to "the men," as our Lord said in prayer, "which Thou gavest Me out of the world."

Now this cannot be anything but that wonderful doctrine of election. Peter knew Who the Lord was. And so did his brother Andrew. And so did James and John. Go through the NT and list those who understood Who the Lord Jesus was, and you can describe them as *men whom the Father had given to Him.*

— And we must not forget the women who were among the Lord's disciples. Mary Magdalene knew. Mary, the mother of our Lord, knew. Joanna and Susanna, who are mentioned in Luke 8:3. Although the Lord used the word "men" in His prayer, yet He meant *women as well as men. All who came to Christ and believed on Him were people who had been given by the Father His Son.*

And when did God make this gift to His Son? He must have made it, as

we have been learning in Ephesians, "before the foundation of the world."

— But while the Lord was thinking especially at this point in His prayer about those who were His true disciples then, yet that would also include every person, male and female, in the OT who was numbered among the people of God. God chose them. Jesus Christ died for them. And the Holy Spirit sought them and drew them to Christ. What a declaration this is of the marvelous grace of God, and of the power of God, and of the wisdom of God.

"Thine they were," our Lord said. The Father is the One Who has chosen us for salvation, and each one of us has been given to Christ. "And Thou gavest them me." The Lord Jesus knew exactly why each one of His disciples, true disciples, had come to Him. They were the Father's gift to Him.

Doesn't it amaze you, but also humble you, that you are among those who are God's gift to His Son? If it doesn't, it should! You can see from this that our salvation has been secure from before the creation of the world.

— But how can you tell a person who has been chosen by the Father, and given to His Son? There are two ways. First, they understand Who Jesus Christ is, and His relationship with the Father. We will see this when we come to verse 8. But we see it also in the last words of this verse: "And they have kept Thy Word."

This word, "kept," in the Greek, is a very interesting Word. It not only means that they believed the messages that our Lord brought, but that their lives were conformed to that Word. And it also means that they jealously guarded that Word from any contamination. They didn't try to add to it. They didn't take away from it. They accepted it just as the Lord gave it although there were times when it was not perfectly clear to them.

— Now this remains an identifying mark of one who really know the Lord Jesus Christ, and who really knows God, the Father. You can never separate a true child of God from the Word of God. The Word of God is His life. He feeds on it. He believes it. He obeys it. And He will lay down his life for it, if necessary. In every generation the masses of the people treat the Bible as though it were just another book. They see nothing in it that particularly interests them. They may admire it as literature, but I am always suspicious of anyone who just looks upon the Word of God as literature. It is the greatest book that was ever written.

There is no book that begins to compare with it, and the only satisfactory way that we can describe it is that *it is the infallible Word of God*.

- Those whom the Father has given to the Son, believe this, and keep it!
Any person who claims to be a Christian, and yet at the same time does not *keep* the Word, does not know what a true child of God is.

Now let me point out to you that there was not a word the Lord spoke in this verse, or in this prayer, but what the Father knew all of it already. In a sense, the Lord was reporting to His Father. His Father had sent Him on a mission. He was not approaching the end of that mission, and soon would be back with the Father. But when the Lord said about prayer, as we have learned in going through the Sermon on the Mount, "your Father knoweth what things that ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Matt. 6:8). But He also knows all that we have done and all that we have said. He knows everything about us. But here in John 17 we learn an important lesson about prayer, and that is that we tell the Lord everything just like we would if He didn't know anything about what we are praying about. How thankful we should be that the Holy Spirit has preserved this prayer for us so that we can learn this simple lesson about prayer.

- I love that verse in the Gospel of Mark where we are told:
And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught (Mark 6:30).

This would be a good thing for all of us to do at the end of every day. Go to the Lord, tell Him what you have done, what you have said to people, how they have reacted. And we can be assured that the Lord will listen to us with the same intense interest as though He were learning something from us for the first time. I repeat: there is nothing in this prayer that the Father was learning for the first time. But the Son spoke to Him as though He did not know.

But let us move on to verse 7.

II. MORE ABOUT WHAT THE DISCIPLES HAD LEARNED (John 17:7-8).

- The disciples knew the Lord Jesus as a Man, but they knew Him as being more than a Man. They knew things which, as Paul would write later, "none of the princes of this world knew" (1 Cor. 2:8).

The disciples were not the prominent people of our Lord's day. They were not the intelligentsia. They were not the scholars of the day, but they had wisdom that was above and beyond what most men would ever know. And this was just the way that our heavenly Father had planned it. There is another prayer that the Lord prayed that emphasized this. You will find it in Matt 11:25-27. Listen to what our Lord said on that occasion:

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

So it was not just that the Lord looked for people who were ready to listen to Him, and then He gave them His message. No, what the Son of God was reporting to His Father was just as the Father had ordained that it should be. And the Son was expressing His full agreement with the Father. And in these words of our Lord in John 17 we see the outworking of that divine plan. *There was no doubt in the minds of the disciples as to the fact that what they saw in the teaching and miracles and characteristics of the Lord Jesus, as a Man, He had received all from the Father.*

What had the Father given to Him, the Son? Verse 2 of this chapter tells us that the Father had given Him "power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as" the Father had "given Him." So He was given authority, and He was given a large host of people. Authority was given to our Lord over thrones and dominions and principalities and powers. Nothing could stand in His way of doing the Father's will.

Now the disciples did not have perfect understanding of all of these great truths, but they were established in the basics, and they understood that God is sovereign, and, therefore, that men cannot stand in His way so that He is unable to do what He has ordained to be done. The more I think about what the disciples understood, the more amazed I am!

But speaking of what they knew, let us go on to verse 8.

When all the world is blinded and hardened against the Word of God, look at what the Lord said about His disciples, and how we have evidence here

of the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope all of you have at least one copy of the Bible with the words of the Lord Jesus printed in red. If you do, look over them some time soon and remember that every word that the Lord said during His ministry here on earth, was a word which the Father had given to Him to give to people.

Don't we have a good argument for the verbal inspiration of all of the Word of God. With our Lord, Who never wrote a book, these were spoken words. But they were words from God. And again the Lord did not change them. He did not add to them, nor take away from them. He gave the word, the very words, which the Father had given to Him to give to people on earth.

Most people could hear them, and forget them. Some heard them, and the words they heard made them hate the Lord Jesus. The Jewish leaders listened to what He had to say, and they wanted to kill Him. *But there was a group of men and women, mostly insignificant people, who heard those word, "and received them." This was nothing short of the grace of God at work in their hearts.*

But we have not finished the verse yet. Notice they received our Lord's words, and evidently through His words they *knew surely*, which means that they became firmly convinced, that Jesus Christ had come from God, and, as our Lord said, "They have believed that Thou didst send Me."

Can't you see from this how important our reaction to the Word of God is? It is the Word that in turn produces faith. And the key to all that we believe is what we believe about Christ. They knew that what Christ had, He had received from the Father. They knew that He had come from the Father, meaning that they believed in His pre-existence. And they believed that He had not come on His own initiative, but that He had been sent by the Father. This means that the Lord Jesus Christ was an Apostle sent by the Father with the most important words that people on earth would ever hear.

Concl: Now one of the most amazing facts about what we have been learning tonight, is that everything that the Lord said about those who were His disciples then, is true of us today. Christ has made known the Name of the Father to us because we were given by the Father to His Son for salvation before the world began. And, while we have not kept His Word perfectly, we are keeping it. And by the grace of God we have

an understanding of things which most of our politicians don't understand. We have an understanding that most university professors do not understand. People are living in the world tonight, as they have been in every generation, and the Word of God means nothing to them. They probably do not believe there is a Word of God, and many do not believe that there is a God at all. But we know that all that Christ had were from God, the Father. We have received His words, and we believe them, and there is no doubt in our hearts but that the Lord Jesus Christ is God's Son, and that He was sent by the Father to do the work that He did while He was here on earth.

We believe all of this, every bit of it! Why? Because we are smarter than other people, or because we are greater in some way than other people. No, we believe what we do about God and about Christ because before there was any creation at all, God gave you and me to Christ, and by His grace the Word of God somehow reached our needy hearts. We may have struggled with it at first, but at last through the Word we believed, and now our hearts are filled with an assurance about Christ, and about God, and about the Word of God, which no one can ever take from us.

You see, when the Lord Jesus was praying to His Father, He spoke of salvation as it really is. It is because of the authority given by the Father to the Son that you and I are rejoicing tonight in this wonderful salvation, and that we are members forever of the family of God.

But let me say one more thing before I close. When we realize what the Lord has done for us, and how much He means to us, shouldn't we be telling others the Gospel message? To be sure, many may tell us to mind our own business, but out in the world tonight there are still people to be reached who, like us, were given to the Son by the Father, and therefore chosen to be saved. The knowledge of the truth that we have been talking about tonight was what filled the heart of the Apostle Paul so that nothing could stop him, not even the threat of death itself, from telling others about the Savior. May that same burden fill our hearts. And may we be faithful to our Lord and heavenly Father just as they have been faithful to us.

OUR HIGH PRIEST IN PRAYER

John 17:9-11a

Intro: Marcus Rainsford, in his book on John 17, said that verse 9 actually marks the beginning of the Lord's prayer as He spoke the words, "I pray for them."

It seems that the older I get, the more my attention is focused upon simple statements like this in the Scriptures. It is simple, and yet it is exceedingly profound. There is much more in these four words than any of us can possibly exhaust in a lifetime of studying it. "I pray for them."

I. "I PRAY FOR THEM" (John 17:9).

As you look at these two and a half verses which I have chosen for my text, you can see that there are two individuals and two groups which the Lord had in mind. The "I" obviously refers to the Lord Jesus Himself. The "them" consists of that large group of people who had been given to Him by the Father. And just as the Lord said that He prayed for them, so He followed it by saying that He was not praying for another large group, completely different by grace from the first group He mentioned. This second group is "the world." And the other Person He mentioned is the One Who had given the people the Lord was referring to by the word "them." And that Person is the Father.

The Lord Jesus was addressing the Father about those whom the Father had given to Him, but He was not praying for the other great division of mankind, those He called, "the world." This manner of speaking to the Father is called *prayer*. That is what our Lord called it when He said to the Father, "I pray for them."

This reference to "them" applied to the disciples who had worked so closely with the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry, but it also applied to others who had believed in Him. Father down in the prayer, in verse 20 to be exact, the Lord Jesus said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." And again He used the word "pray" – the same word that He had used in verse 9. When you and I talk to each other, we call it conversation, or as Christians we call it fellowship. But when we are speaking to God, we call it *prayer*. But the unusual thing about this statement is that we have One Member of the Godhead speaking to Another Member of the Godhead, and we see that in both of these instances our Lord said that *He was praying*. How

could prayer ever be given a greater place of importance. How blessed are the people about whom the Lord would say, "I pray for them." He had done many other things for them. He had sought them. He had brought them to Himself. He had taught them many, many times. There were times when He had to rebuke them. He was about to die for them. But here we find ourselves on most holy ground when the Lord said, "I pray for them."

There is not much said in the Gospels about how the disciples prayed for themselves. We are often so busy that we forget to pray for ourselves. Nor is much, if anything said, about how the disciples prayed for each other. But surely that was going on, too. But for the Lord to say, "I pray for them," shows how great their need was.

We can be sure that this was not the first time that the Lord had prayed for them. You probably remember the time when the Lord said,

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren (Luke 22:31-32).

Luke also tells us that before the Lord chose His twelve apostles, "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12).

All of the disciples were a people much prayed for by our Lord Jesus Christ. They needed to be prayed for, and the Son of God was seeking for them from the Father that which only the Father could give them.

These last hours that our Lord spent with His disciples were extremely important. He gave them further teaching which we have in John 13 through 16, but then He prayed for them. He was interceding with the Father on their behalf. Soon the Lord would leave them, but that would not put an end to His praying for them. The writer of the book of Hebrews says of our Lord that "He ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). And we have that same truth in Rom. 8:34 where the Apostle Paul was speaking of our Lord "Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us." Even before we were saved, the Lord was praying for us, and since we have been saved He has faithfully continue to pray for us. He is praying for us at this very moment, seeking the blessing of the Father upon us. Once this little statement gets into our hearts, it should make a great deal of difference in our lives. Our Lord is

our Example. And if He so diligently prays for us, it should provoke us to be faithful in praying for each other. We may have many different needs, but no need is greater than to have our Lord praying for us (or He wouldn't be doing what He is doing), and next to our Lord's praying, it is very important that we pray for one another.

Just think about those words even as they apply to yourself: "I pray for them." The Son talking to the Father about those whom the Father had given to Him – how astounding this is! And it is not just general praying for all of us, but also specific praying. He calls His own sheep by name! See John 10:3.

What a blessed group were those early disciples! The Lord was praying for them. At the very hour when you would think that our Lord would have been so occupied with the terrible suffering that was ahead of Him, we find Him praying for His disciples. "I pray for them."

But note the next statement. It is as ominous and the first statement is glorious.

II. "I PRAY NOT FOR THE WORLD" (John 17:9).

Those for whom the Lord had been praying had at one time been in the world, and a part of the world. But the Lord had called them from the world even though they were still in the world. And most of you will remember that the Lord was not praying that the Father would take them out of the world because they had a work to do in the world. His prayer for the disciples in relation to the world was that the Father would "keep them from the evil," or *from the evil one*, that is, the Devil who is the god of this world.

The Lord wasn't praying here for the scribes and Pharisees. He wasn't praying Caiaphas or Annas. He was not praying for the Roman Emperor, nor for the Roman army. He was not praying for Pilate. He was not praying for anyone in the world. He was praying for His disciples.

Now we have plenty of evidence in the Psalms that David, for example, prayed against his enemies, asking the Lord for protection and deliverance. And we know also, thinking of our Lord's praying, that from the Cross He prayed concerning the mob of people before Him, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). But the world was not on His heart. "I pray not for the world."

Here again we see an important point which is illustrated again and again in the prayers that are recorded for us in the NT. Not exclusively, but overwhelmingly, the prayers of the apostles were for the people of God, not for the world. Obviously God has had a work to do in our hearts to make us realize what it means that we were a part of the world, under the judgment of God. But in the ongoing of the work of the Lord, that which is primarily important, even as far as the world is concerned, is what God is doing in the hearts of His people. We will be noticing in coming messages what the Lord had to say about the world. But here, as the Lord was beginning the intercessory part of His prayer He not only said about His disciples, "I pray for them," but He immediately followed it with, "I pray not for the world."

When you consider the weakness of the disciples and contrast that with the overwhelming power of a God-less world, we get a glimpse into the ways of the Lord when He said, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world."

All of this is followed by several reasons which the Lord Jesus gave to His heavenly Father as to why He was praying specifically for His disciples, and not for the world.

III. THE REASONS BEHIND THE LORD'S PRAYING (John 17: 9b-11a).

The first reason was:

A. Because the Father had given them to Him (v. 9).

The Father had chosen Peter and Andrew and James and John and all of the other disciples in eternity past, and they, along with the other disciples, are the ones whom the Father had given to Him. They were the special charge given to our Lord by His Father in heaven. They were His responsibility, and a big part of that responsibility was praying for them.

You and I will never know until we get to heaven how many tragedies have been avoided, how many sins we have been kept from committing, or how many blessings we have experienced because the Father has charged His Son with our care. That is a major reason why He prays for us.

But let me point out a second reason:

B. Because we still belong to the Father (vv. 9b-10).

Don't think for a moment that when the Father gave us to His Son, that from that time on we belonged to the Son but no longer belonged to the Father. We were given to the Son for the purpose of redeeming us from our sins, but we still belong to the Father. We belong to the Father and to the Son, just as those early disciples did. He is our Father; we are His children. And no one can ever sever the relationship that we have with our heavenly Father, just as no one can sever our relationship with Christ.

Let me remind you of some of our Lord's words which bring this out. They are found in John 10:27-30:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

There is no question but that we belong to the Father and to the Son, and this is another reason why our Lord prayed for those who were His disciples then, and also for all of us who belong to Him now.

Notice how the Lord confirmed this in the words recorded for us in verse 10. (Read.)

When you take verse 10 and place it beside our Lord's requests in verses 1 and 5 of this prayer, you can see that one part of the way the Lord was to be glorified was in the lives of His people. And therefore it was absolutely imperative that the Lord pray for them if this purpose were to be realized. By God's grace Christ is glorified through what God is doing in our lives in answer to the prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there are still other reasons.

C. Because the Lord was soon to leave His disciples (v. 11).

You and I are not in a position to know what it meant to the disciples to have the Lord with them. They were justifiably troubled when He spoke of leaving them. That is why the Lord said to them, "Let not your heart be troubled ... "

The Lord made full provision for His disciples before leaving them, but among those things which He did was to pray for them. The comfort, the

encouragement of the personal and physical presence of the Lord Jesus was to be taken from them. but not His blessing, nor the blessing of the Father. From the moment of our Lord's ascension the disciples were to learn more than ever about what it means to walk by faith. And it was something that they did not look forward to. But how comforting to know that the Lord was not going to forget them, but was going to continue on in prayer for them. "I pray for them" not only means that He was praying for them as He spoke the words of this prayer, but that He would continue to pray for them, and would never stop!

But notice a fourth reason for the Lord's prayer.

D. Because of where the Lord was leaving them (v. 11).

We see this in the Lord's words. "But these are in the world, and I come to Thee." We can understand a little more about the power of our Lord's prayers for us when we remember *where we are!* Only hell itself can possibly worse than this world with all of its temptations and corruptions and hostilities toward the Lord and His people. As one of our hymns declares, this world is not a friend of grace. This world would hinder us on every hand from walking day by day in fellowship with our Lord, and doing the will of God. But look again at verse 15. (Read.) We can be thankful for what the Lord said in verse 24, but that is not our lot yet. Some day we will be in that place which the Lord has gone to prepare for us, but as long as we live here on earth *we are in this place!* And we know that the world has not changed from what it became when Adam sinned against God. Creation is glorious, but still it bears the marks of sin. And it seems that the longer we are here, the worse things get. It is not that the world is worse than it used to be, but we are realizing more and more what it is like. When I read in our voters pamphlets what some of our politicians who are presently in office, and who are liable to be re-elected, stand for, I marvel at the patience of God. It is no wonder that the aged and saintly Apostle John wrote late in his own life,

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

It looks now like the Devil is winning the victory, but that is where we need to cling to the truth of the Word of God. The Lord has left us here in

— this world to bear testimony by our lives and by our words to the grace of God in salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus know how easily the Devil can trip us up so that we will dishonor the Name of our Lord, and of our heavenly Father. That is a big reason why the Lord lives at the Father's right hand, and is continually praying for us.

Concl: Aren't these very encouraging words. Sundays are such wonderful days because we have the opportunity to be with each other. But tomorrow we begin another week. We can thank God for the times of fellowship He gives us during the week. We can thank God that we are in families where we enjoy fellowship with each other in the Lord. But the world out there is a hard and bad place to be. "The Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). But we can be thankful that the Apostle John has told us that "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). And so the victory is ours! But the glory belongs to our Savior and to our heavenly Father. The Lord Jesus prays, and the Father always answers His prayers. Let us be diligent then in prayer ourselves, and faithful in living for the Lord, knowing that our Lord is praying, and He is the One Who gives us the victory.

— Always remember these words: "I pray for them" and "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." We can thank God every day for a Savior Who so faithfully prays for us.

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"HOLY FATHER"

John 17:11b-12

Intro: In considering the latter half of verse 11 and then verse 12, it is important for us to remember what our Lord Jesus Christ said in the preceding three verses about His prayer. The Lord Jesus said that He would pray for them, and this is what He did in the remainder of His prayer – first for those who were His disciples at that time, meaning most likely the eleven, but later, beginning with verse 20, for all future believers. What honor the Lord has placed upon prayer when He said, "I pray for them." And that honor was greatly increased when He added that He was not praying for the world. And even to this day it is true that the Lord prays for us, but He doesn't pray for the world. He is not on the world's side, but on the side of His people – on our side. "He ever liveth to make intercession" for us, those whom He is saving. See Heb. 7:25.

He was praying for them because He was leaving them, and not only because He was leaving them, but because of where He was leaving them. He was leaving them in the world. They had always needed God's blessing, but now that the Lord Jesus was leaving them, they would need the blessing of God more than ever. And so the Lord prayed for them.

Obviously this was not the first time that He had prayed for them, but even the Lord's prayers took on new significance for them because they would no longer have the personal, physical contact with the Lord Jesus on a daily basis such as they had enjoyed before.

Perhaps we can compare this to the way we pray for our children. We pray for them before they are born. We pray for them all through their lives as they are growing up and with us day after day. But when the time comes that they leave home to go to college, or to move out on their own, prayer takes on a new importance in our lives. This may help us to understand why those words were so important at this time in the lives of His disciples. He had encouraged them by His presence, by His teaching, by the miracles which He had performed. The very fact that the Lord was with them, would have encouraged holy living and faithful service. But now the Lord was leaving them, not where they would be encouraged to live for the Lord, but where the influences would be downward and away from God, and not upward to closer fellowship with the Lord. He was leaving the world, but He was leaving them "in the world." And so He had said to His Father, "I pray for them." If view of His departure, there could hardly have been more encouraging words for them to hear.

He prayed for them because they belonged to the Father. They were the Father's children. He knew how precious every one of them was to the Father, and how open the Father's heart would be to hear the prayers of His beloved Son as He prayed for the apostles. So much responsibility rested upon them, and the Father would have been interested in every detail of their need. The words, "And I come to Thee," may not only have been a reference to His ascension, but to the fact that at that very moment the Lord was coming to the Father on behalf of the apostles.

But one of the very interesting parts of this prayer-chapter is not only that the Lord was praying for His own disciples, but what His burdens were. Let us notice what they were throughout the epistle. We have done this before, but it is important that we do it again as we have reached this point in the prayer.

There are three requests which stand out as requests. The first request we are considering tonight. (Read verse 11b.) The second request is in verse 17. (Read.) The third request is like the first request, and we find it in verses 20 and 21. (Read.) And the fourth is in verse 24. (Read.)

But suggested also in His prayer are some other requests. For example, look at the latter part of verse 13: "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." And then it seems that we need to include the very last statement in the prayer. Here He was reminding the Father of one of the objectives He had had as He had ministered to them, and it continued to be a burden that was upon His heart: "that the love wherewith thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

We will come to those other requests later, but let us turn our attention now to the first request the Lord made for His disciples.

I. THE NAME FOR GOD WHICH HE USED.

You see it in the middle of verse 11. The Lord addressed God as "Holy Father."

Perhaps when you hear this name, or title, whichever you want to call it, you are reminded, as I am, that this is a title which Catholics use in addressing the Pope. Our Lord used it only once, and here in verse 11 we are told when it was. He called God, "Holy Father." Now to take God's Name, and to use it in addressing another person (I don't care who he is), this is taking "the name of the Lord our God in vain." This is a title which

belongs only to God, and it is sinful to use it in addressing the Pope or any other person regardless of whom he might be. There is only one "Holy Father," and He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our heavenly Father. We can call Him our "Holy Father" because that is what He is, but it is sin to call anyone else, "Holy Father."

When the Lord was denouncing the scribes and Pharisees with the words we find in Matthew 23, among other things that He said to His disciples, was this:

And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven (Matt. 23:9).

Now the Lord was not saying that we are not to call our fathers on earth, "Father," but He was speaking of titles given to religious leaders like the scribes and Pharisees. The Jews may have been the first ones to call their leaders in the synagogues and the temple, "Father." But that is a title which belongs only to God. Not only are people sinning when they call the Pope, "Holy Father," or their priests, "father," but the men who allow this are sinning by permitting their followers to use this sacred title. I feel the same way about the title, *Reverend*. The Bible says that "holy and reverend is His Name" (Psa. 111:19). So, if it is His Name, I have no business in using it. There are more ways than one to take the Lord's Name in vain, but this is one!

But going back to our Lord's prayer, it is evident that the Lord Jesus loved to call God, "Father." Let me remind you again of the times He used that word "Father" in this prayer. It is in verses 1, 5, 11, 21, 24, and in verse 25, "righteous Father."

But what does it mean that God is our "Holy Father"? In the immediate context, you can see that twice in the first part of verse 11 the Lord mentioned "the world." And it was the concern of our Lord that He was leaving His disciples in this world, which then as now was a very wicked world. The world presents us with many dangers, and those dangers are not always designed to bring us down into the gutters of life. The world has its intellectual dangers. The wisdom of this world is in direct contrast with the wisdom of God. And it is often in the university classroom that Christian students mean unexpected dangers, and often they are not prepared for them. Of course, no one knows the world like the Members of the Godhead, and so the Father would immediately be responsive to the prayer of His Son. Our heavenly Father, being a "Holy Father," cannot be tempted with evil, and He will never tempt us with evil. See James 1:13-14. Nor has God Himself ever been guilty of sin, and He never will be

guilty of sin. He is perfectly holy, infinitely holy, with not a single blemish upon Him. And He is the only One Who is sufficient to do what the Lord Jesus was preparing to ask the Father to do.

But what was the request?

II. OUR LORD'S FIRST REQUEST FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

(Read the rest of verse 11.)

The word "keep" which the Lord Jesus used here is a word which speaks of guarding someone, and even includes the idea of *keeping one's eye upon that which one is guarding*. I was the oldest of seven children, and as I got older, I often had the job of taking care of the younger ones. Often when my folks were leaving my Dad would say, "Now be sure to keep your eye on them," referring to my brothers and sister. This is what the Lord was saying to His "Holy Father." He wanted the Father to guard them from sin and to keep His eye on every one of them. And isn't this what the Father does for every one of us. He never takes His eye off of us, and when we are in danger of sinning, how often the Father works in special ways to keep us from sinning.

But what did the Lord mean when He said, "through thine own Name"?

God's Name speaks of His character, and when we speak of the character of God, we ought to know that we are speaking of the attributes of God. And so the Lord Jesus was calling upon the Father to "keep" those whom He had given to His Son, by the exercise of all of His glorious attributes. And here we can list all of the attributes of God. I won't do that but let me mention a few. This certainly would involve the power of God. It would also include the wisdom of God. Most of the time when we get into sin, it is due to our own foolishness. God has the power to providentially order our circumstances so that we are sovereignly and wisely kept from sin. And often the mercy of God is called into action, as well as the patience of the Lord. Every child of God, regardless of who he is, has reason, many reasons, to thank God for keeping him from sin.

However, the Lord had a special way in which He desired that the Father would keep His disciples. And it was this: "that they may be one, as we are."

One way in which the Lord showed the importance of this request, was

that He got back to this same request in verses 20-23 when He began to pray for all future believers. (Read vv. 20-23.) We will talk about this later, but I want you to remember what is coming as we move along in our Lord's prayer.

Let me say it again, the request is, "that they may be one, as we are."

We know that God the Father and God the Son, and we can also include the Holy Spirit, are one in essence. That is they all have the same nature, and so they all have the same attributes. One has no more Deity than the Others (if such a thing were possible). The Lord said that the One Who had seen Him, had seen the Father. Cf. John 14:9. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, but that does not make us Deity. We will be like Him, but there will always be a difference between the Lord Jesus and us, the people whom the Father has given to Him. It is true that we are partakers of the divine nature, and this has a lot to do with our oneness, but still we are not one in essence as the Members of the God-head are.

Well, then, what does it mean?

It certainly can't mean that the Lord wants us all to belong to the same denomination. There were no denominations in our Lord's Day. They had the basis for denominations in the Corinthian church where they were divided according to the men they preferred. With some it was Paul, with others it was Peter, with still others it was Apollos, and others with Christ. I am sure that our denominational differences are a grief to the Lord, and we often leave people in the world confused when they are trying to find the truth. One church says that this is the way to be saved, and another church says, "No, it is this way." And most people don't know enough to go to the Bible to check everything that they hear. As I mentioned recently, there are often man-made attempts to get all Christians together, but unfortunately it always seems that unity would be at the expense of doctrine. True unity will never sacrifice doctrine, but will adhere strictly to it.

You can see that there are elements of truth in which I have mentioned, but neither of the above is the whole truth.

It seems that what the Lord was referring to was oneness through the spiritual union that we have in Christ. At this point it would be good for all of us to go back and read the Gospel of John through again to notice all

that it has to say about the union that existed between the Father and the Son. This had to do with life itself. It has to do with the words that the Son of God spoke, and it had to do with the works that He did. And it was about this that the Lord spoke to His disciples when they left the Upper Room, and made their way eventually to the Garden of Gethsemane. And I am speaking of the words we find in John 15, especially verses 1 through 17. (Read.)

The Christian life is not a life in which God gives us certain rules, and then we are responsible to obey those rules. That would be impossible because most of us have tried it that way. No, there is a marvelous union which exists between each of us and Christ, and this is the basis upon which we can obey the Lord, and this is the basis upon which we are to serve the Lord. The very life of Christ becomes our through our union with Him, and this is the basis of all true spiritual unity.

The Apostle Paul expressed it perfectly in those familiar words we have found in Gal. 2:20. (Quote.)

We have been joined to Christ in a living relationship. When we need wisdom (which is all the time), He is our wisdom. When we need strength (and again, this is all of the time), He is our strength. He is our peace. He is our patience. He is our purity. Christ is all, and in all. This is the message of the NT epistles, and describes our relationship to Christ.

Hudson Taylor wrote a book on that little book, The Song of Solomon. He called the book, *Union and Communion*. I don't know of two words which more accurately describe what *oneness* means than these words: *Union and Communion*. This was the Lord's burden for His people, that the Lord would guard us from depending upon ourselves, or adopting the ways of the world, and He would teach us to trust in Him.

William Hendriksen pointed out in his commentary on this verse that the word "be" is what is called a durative present, and can be translated this way, "that they may constantly be one, as we are." We are one in Christ, but what is needed is for us to learn to live that way. And this comes about through daily communion with our Lord Jesus Christ and with God, our heavenly, Holy Father!

Then the Lord spoke of His own ministry.

III. THE NATURE OF THE LORD'S MINISTRY (John 17:12).

— This is just what the Lord had been doing with His disciples. It is not easy for us to learn to live such a life, but the Lord had patiently been teaching His disciples the meaning of spiritual living. And He had "kept" them. The work was not finished in any of them. There was still much to be done, but He had not failed with any of them – *except for one disciple!*

The Lord did not mention him by the name we would know. He was speaking of Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would betray Him into the hands of His enemies. But instead we are told what he was: Judas was "the son of perdition."

Perhaps you remember that this expression is used in 2 Thess. 2:3, and reading verse 4 with it:

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God (2 Thess. 2:3-4).

— To refer to one in this way was common among the Jews. A "son of perdition" was one who was the offspring of perdition. Judas was the son of eternal ruin. And it was predicted in Scripture that there would be such a person.

Cf. Acts 2:15-20, 24-25. (Read.)

— **Concl:** Judas was numbered with them, but he was never one of them, and could not be one of them. He was a disciple and an apostle, but not a believer. And the Lord Jesus knew all of the time that one way in which the other eleven needed to be "kept" was from Judas. What havoc has been produced among the Lord's people by those who are in the church, but whose hearts have never been changed. They don't understand the Christian life. They don't understand what it means to serve the Lord. They do not know God, nor His Son Jesus Christ. Oh, how we need to be thankful that our "Holy Father" Who will make us holy, exercises a sovereign control over our lives to preserve that precious union which we have in Christ. We are going to be learning more about this union in our Lord's prayer, but at this point we need to know, and to be thankful that we know, that the Father is carrying on the work of the Son, teaching us, protecting us, often rebuking us, so that we may learn more and more of this precious union that is ours with Christ.

BELIEVERS IN A HOSTILE WORLD

John 17:13-16

Intro: One thing that stands out not only in the fact that the Lord prayed for His own, but *what* He prayed *when* He prayed for them, is the great love that He had for His people. He was returning to the Father, but He was concerned about what would happen to them when He was gone. He had manifested the Father's Name to them, according to verse 6. He had given them the words which the Father had given to Him, according to verse 8. He had committed them to the Father's keeping power, in verse 11, and He mentioned how He Himself had kept them while He had been with them. Thus, up to this point the disciples had much to encourage them in view of the fact that the Lord Jesus was preparing to leave them.

At the same time our Lord's prayer shows how deeply devoted the Lord Jesus was to His Father. In verse 11 He had said, "And I come to Thee." And He repeated those words at the beginning of verse 13: "And now come I to Thee." His mission on earth was about to be fulfilled, and He was looking forward to His return to the Father in heaven. But we should note that the Lord did not say that He was returning to heaven, although that is what He was about to do, but He was returning to the Father.

That is the way we should think about heaven. Obviously heaven is going to be the most glorious place, but the best thing about heaven is that our Lord is there, and our heavenly Father is there. All of us have loved ones there, too, and it will be wonderful to see them all again, but nothing can compare with the fact that we will be "with the Lord." For us, it is Christ Who will make heaven, heaven.

Our Lord told His disciples in the words we find in John 14:1-3,

- 1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
- 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
- 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

And if you let your eye run down to the 24th verse of John 17, you will notice this same emphasis. In 1 Thessalonians 4 where the Apostle Paul was writing about the coming of the Lord, he concluded verse 17 by saying, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." *How easy it is for us to*

be looking for an event, but not looking for a Person.

And so there is much instruction for us in our Lord's words found at the beginning of verse 13, "And now come I to Thee." How the Lord was looking forward to being back with the Father.

At this point in our Lord's prayer His references to "the world" become very prominent.

But before we notice that, note how the Lord had concluded the message which He had given to His apostles just before He prayed. See. John 16:33.

And before that, see what our Lord said in John 15:18-21. The Lord was very concerned about *where* He was leaving His disciples. It was in the world that He had created, but it was the world in which sin and evil held the upper hand. And in the verses which follow, the verses I have chosen as my text, we see three special provisions that the Lord had made for them in connection with the place where He was leaving them.

The first provision was:

I. HIS JOY (John 17:13).

While the Lord had walked with them from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane, He had said,

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

In John 16:33 the Lord said much the same thing about *peace*. (Read.) Along with what we are seeing in John 17:13, we see that the Lord was concerned that they would experience His joy even though He was leaving them, and leaving them in a place like the world.

You see, God looks at the world in a much different way from the way most people in the world look at the world. In fact, most people in the world are blinded to the true nature of the world. They do not understand that the Devil is "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). They don't see the sin and defilement that touches the life of every person in the world. They continue to work on the problems that we all face in the world, but they don't know the real nature of those problems. But it was in this world that our Lord was speaking, and the speaking that He was doing at the moment we are concerned about in this prayer, was in the world, and it was in this

world with all of its hostility toward God, and toward Jesus Christ, and to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, that the Lord Jesus prayed "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." It ought to be of special interest to every one of us to find out how we can be truly joyful, living in a world like this.

John the Baptist of his joy fulfilled in John 3:29 when He was reacting to his own disciples when they were complaining that it seemed that all people were leaving them, i.e., John and his disciples, to follow the Lord Jesus. But instead of agreeing with them, He spoke of the time when the bridegroom was claiming the bride, and then he said, "This my joy therefore is fulfilled" (John 3:29).

He rejoiced to see the purposes of God being fulfilled even though it meant that he was beginning to see his own ministry decrease. He followed the words which I have read to you by saying, "He," speaking of the Lord, "must increase, but I ... decrease."

As you read the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels, what was it that gave Him His greatest joy, even in the light of the terrible suffering which He knew that He was going to have to endure? There is only one answer to that question: *That which gave our Lord the greatest joy was in seeing the Father's will done and the Father's Name glorified.* Look back at the first five verses of John 17 and you will see that this is true.

So how could the disciples have the Lord's own joy fulfilled in themselves, and how can we today in the midst of all of the trials and disappointments of this life? It is by living to see the will of God done, and His purposes fulfilled.

If you will think about this, you will see that such joy has to be based solidly on faith in the sovereignty of God and in the equal sovereignty of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we feel that we are just subject to chance, or to whatever men may do that will involve us, there is no place for joy in such a life. But when you understand that we are here to do the will of God, and to seek the glory of God in all things, then there can be JOY! And that was the joy that our Lord experienced when He was here on earth.

He delighted to do the will of God. He sought always to please the Father. And this is what He prayed for in the Garden of Gethsemane – "Not my will, but Thine be done."

One of the first times that we see this prayer of our Lord fulfilled was when, after the apostles were arrested, brought before the Jewish council for trial, then beaten, and commanded that they should never again speak in the Name of Jesus, Luke tell us:

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ (Acts 5:41-42).

Concerning the Lord Jesus, cf. Heb. 12:1-2.

So, if the disciples were to have the Lord's joy fulfilled in themselves, it meant that they would have to walk in such loving fellowship with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ, that their greatest joy would be in doing God's will and seeing His Name glorified. And right here in this world in which we are living tonight, we, too, can move toward having the Lord's joy made full in us. It doesn't come all at once. It undoubtedly means a lot of changes in the way we live. But this is one of the grandest results of a life lived in fellowship with the Lord.

But what else did the Lord provide for His disciples living in a world like this.

II. THE WORD OF GOD (John 17:14).

Read verse 8 again. It is not without its meaning that the longest chapter in the Bible has to do exclusively with the Word of God. The Lord Jesus had told His disciples things which the people of God had never heard before. And after the Lord went back to the Father, men were raised up to complete the revelation that God intended for us to have.

In the midst of all of the trials that Jeremiah experienced as a servant of the Lord, and as a prophet, what did he tell us about the Word? Cf. Jer. 15:16,

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

The Psalmist, probably David spoke along this line in Psalms 119:111 and again in verse 162:

111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

And what about Psalm 119:97? "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation

all the day."

The writings of Solomon are full of references to the way he treasured the Word of God. And Job said that valued it more than his "necessary food." And when our Lord was tempted by the Devil, how did He overcome him? Three times the Lord Jesus quoted the Word of God. But more of this in a moment.

But looking again at verse 14 we find that one reason that the world despises Christians, is because we have the Word of God, and because we believe it, and because we preach it, wanting to spread it to every nation on the face of the earth in every generation! And it is the Word of God that separates us from the world. The reason we don't live like people in the world live is because we have the Word of God. That was the precious treasure that the disciples possessed, and the Holy Spirit was given to them to bring to their remembrance the things that the Lord Jesus had taught them. Cf. John 14:26.

Cf. Psalms 119:165: "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

In spite of the world's opposition, we have the Word of God, the living, powerful, and eternal Word of the living God. And as the Lord uses the Word in our lives, we can live for Him even in a world like this – and the world has always been at enmity with God ever since the first sin was committed.

And now we come to the third provision that the Lord Jesus made for His disciples, and for us even today.

III. HIS OWN FAITHFUL INTERCESSION (John 17:15-16).

Here we come to another request that the Lord prayed for His apostles, and we are safe in assuming that He prays the same prayer for us today. (Read John 17:15-16).

We long for the day when we will be delivered from sin and all of the tragedies that it has brought upon life in this world. And the more our world despises the Word of God, the greater those troubles and tragedies will become. When we despise the Word of God, we are asking for the judgment of God. Part of that judgment is the fruit of sin – and we have many illustrations that are given to us every day of the fruit of sin. But

our Bibles also tell us of the downfall of some of the greatest nations in the past, and that downfall in every instance was due to S-I-N! And all of those nations felt just as smug and secure as we do today. The judgments usually came without warning except for the preaching of the prophets. Things are really going the way the Devil wants them to go, but that is not going to last forever.

The Lord prayed not that His people would be taken out of the world, but that they would be kept from the evil. And, standing as it does in the KJV, we know that the Lord does keep us from evil and sin and all that is such a curse in this world.

But this request was bigger than that, as big as that is! The Greek text would really require that we translate "the evil," as *the Evil One*! The Apostle John taught us that "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

Who is in the world? Obviously it is the Evil One, the Devil, and Satan. These are some of his names. And by the way, the Greek for *the Evil One* describes the Devil as one whose influence and work is always, always, always bad. He is incapable of doing good. If what he does appears to be good, it is only to trap us so that he can drag us down and into hell if possible.

Who is in us? The Holy Spirit is in us. The Lord Jesus Christ is in us. And the Scriptures even teach that God, the Father is in us. But here the Lord Jesus was praying that the Father would "keep us from the Evil One." This shows you and me that we are not capable of keeping ourselves. And it also shows us that only God can keep us – and when I say "God," I am including God the Holy Spirit, and God the Son. But that is what it takes.

And the reason that the disciples could expect to be guarded and safeguarded from the Evil One, was because they were not of the world, just as the Lord was not of the world. He never was "of the world." We once were. But God in His grace has delivered us through the blood of the Cross, and now we are "of God." We are trophies of the grace of God.

Concl: I don't know how I could speak of any more important themes concerning our lives in this world than what the Lord Jesus has mentioned in the verses before us tonight. He has spoken of our delight in knowing and doing the will of God which can only come to us as the

result of daily fellowship with God. And then He spoke of the Word of God. Oh, how we need to be reading the Word of God! My heart was really touched when I heard that dear Millie Mattson who will be 91 early next year, sick as far as we know with her final illness, and yet mustering her strength to catch up on her Bible reading. Wouldn't that be a wonderful way to meet the Lord? Don't let a day go by without spending some time reading the Word. It will help you and me to cope with life in this world.

And then there is the praying, the intercessory praying, of our Lord Jesus Christ. And He wouldn't be doing this if it were not absolutely necessary. Only when we get to heaven will we find out how many times we have been delivered from sin and from accidents and difficulties of all kinds because we have our Great High Priest watching over us, and praying for us.

And in all of these we are brought back to the Word of God. It is in the Word that we see the Lord, and learn of Him. It is in the Word that we learn how the Lord wants us to live, which is altogether different from the way the people of the world live. And it is in the Word that we learn how the Lord keeps us through the Word. The armor which we have, in all of its parts, has to do with the Word of God.

How wonderful it is that the Lord Jesus, in His prayer, has shown us how we can live for God in this world that is hostile toward God, toward Jesus Christ, and to all who have been saved by His grace. Let us turn these verses into prayer, and praise the Lord that He has made such adequate provisions for us to live for Him in a world like this.

More is coming in the prayer about the world, but we will stop here for tonight.

SANCTIFICATION AND THE WORD

John 17:17

— **Intro:** We are presently in that section of our Lord's Prayer where He was praying for those who were His disciples at that time. He had called them out of the world to Himself. He had loved them, had taught them, had known them intimately, and at that time was preparing to leave them. He knew their needs very well, and this prayer includes requests for all of them. They may have needed the blessings which the Lord prayed for in varying degrees, but the fact is that they all needed the same blessings, and would continue to need them as long as they lived. And surely one of their greatest needs was the need for sanctification. This is a long word which most people never have heard until they were saved. Afterwards, however, we learn that there is hardly a word that is more important than this word. And it is very significant that it was upon the heart of the Lord that He prayed for His own.

But let us begin tonight with:

I. THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION.

— As I have often said, and others said it long before I came along, *it is salvation in the present tense*. It is the work that the Lord continues to do in all of our hearts from the moment we are saved until we are finally with the Lord.

Let me review with you the three tenses of salvation. There is a past tense, a present tense, and a future tense. The past tense is what we have in mind when we say that we were saved. The present tense is what we have in mind when we say, "I am being saved." And the future tense indicates that some day our salvation will be complete, and so we say that we will be saved.

— The past tense, true of all believers, is justification. We have been declared righteous before God on the basis of faith in the work of Christ on the Cross. We are fully accepted by God, forgiven and cleansed from our sins, and given the gift of eternal life. We are born again. We have been made new creatures in Christ. God is our heavenly Father, the Lord Jesus is our Savior, and we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. But the basic meaning of justification is that we have been declared righteous before God on the basis of Christ's work on the Cross where He took our sins upon Himself, suffering the penalty that should have been ours, so that from that

moment on we have full acceptance with God. We are fully prepared for heaven when we are declared righteous before God. As the Apostle Paul said in his letter to the church at Rome,

— Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

God does many, many things for us and within us when He justifies us. *But as wonderful as justification is (and it is the same for every believer), it is just a beginning. There are still many changes that need to be made in our lives if from a practical standpoint we are to be pleasing to God. This is where sanctification comes in.*

Sanctification is a work of God, especially the work of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are being changed from what we have been, to what God ultimately intends for us to be. As I think we all know by this time, God's purpose in salvation is to make us like Christ. When we come to God for salvation, there is nothing about us that is like Christ. We are sinners, defiled by our sins, and totally unacceptable to God. We are dead in our sins and without eternal life. So the work of sanctification is that divine work which continues right on through our lives here on earth which has as its object the task of making us holy as God is holy.

— J. C. Ryle, a great preacher of the Word in the last century, said in his commentary on the Gospel of John, "Holy living is the great proof of the reality of Christianity" (Vol. II, p. 441). And he also said,

It is a prayer that the Father would make His people more holy, more spiritual, more pure, more saintly in thought and word and deed, in life and character (*Ibid.*).

Basically the word that our Lord used means *to set apart*. You will remember that in this prayer of our Lord, in verse 6, it is recorded that He said to His Father in heaven, "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." All of us were defiled in many and different ways, not only by nature, but by the very fact that we were in the world. So that when we are saved, we need to be changed inwardly in our hearts, and outwardly in the way we live. Character needs changing, and so do our habits of life.

— Well, the work of sanctification means that we are being set apart *from the world*, and set apart *to the Lord*, and *for the Lord*! The Holy Spirit begins to change us from the sinful way that we have been living, so that we will be holy in all aspects of our life. And it is such a tremendous work,

requiring so many changes, that only the Persons of the Godhead can bring it about. We will see *how* this is done in a moment, but for the moment let us recognize that sanctification is that continuing work of God by which He is making us holy. It means a complete change, but it does not take place all at once.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, he told them that this was his prayer for them:

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

So this is what God is doing in each one of our lives today, and has been working at it every day since we were saved. And all of the experiences of our lives, the trials and testings, the obvious blessings that the Lord gives to us, are all a part of that work. Even the frustrations that we experience every day, are designed in the hand of our Lord to further that great work. This is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote to the church at Rome, and said,

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:28-30).

(Explain.)

Now please notice that in the last of those three verses he jumped from justification to that which is the third tense in salvation: *glorification!* Justification leads to sanctification, and sanctification leads to glorification. The three words together make up the doctrine of salvation. Salvation means to be justified, to be sanctified, and to be glorified. We are now justified, we are being sanctified, and it is absolutely certain, if we truly know the Lord as our Savior, that some day we will be glorified. That will take place when we finally see the Lord.

So it is important that we understand the whole scope of salvation in order

that we will know what we are talking about when we talk of sanctification.

Now let us think a little more about:

II. WHY WE NEED TO BE SANCTIFIED.

In our Lord's Prayer, the urgent reason appears to be because the Lord was leaving His disciples, and that He was leaving them in the world. And, although we have not gotten to the point that I am about to mention, we will get to it, and it is this: He was leaving them "in the world" even though they were no longer a part of the world. And to make the need for sanctification even more apparent, He was preparing to send them out into the world. And the world is the place where, according to verse 15, the Evil One, Satan, the Devil, "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4) exercises his great power.

We do not need anyone to tell us in the light of what is going on in our country today, that the world has no desire for holiness. The world has no place for God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or the Bible, or even for us who are the people of God. The world is full of moral contamination to which we are exposed every day of our lives. It is in the conversation that we hear. It is in the magazines that we read. It is in the entertainment that is produced. It is in the very way that people live. As the Apostle John wrote much later, and which we need to remember at all times,

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

Things that often seem to be the most innocent and harmless in the world can be filled with all kinds of danger for the Christian. Sin is deceptive. The Devil is deceptive. The world is full of deception, and it is always a threat to the Christian. This is why the Apostle Paul gave us another very important exhortation regarding the world. You will find it in Rom. 12:1-2. Listen to these familiar words:

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

— And the Apostle Paul gave another strong exhortation to the Corinthians which had to do with the world. I am sure that most of you will remember what Paul wrote. His admonition is found in the last two verses of 2 Cor. 6, and it carries over into the first verse of chapter 7. He had been warning them about unequal yokes. Here are his words:

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

CHAPTER 7

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 6:17-7:1).

— So you can see that the world, combined with the Devil, and the fact that our old natures respond favorably to temptations, we all need to be constantly on our guard against sin in its many forms.

But all that I have been saying so far has been largely of a negative nature. In order to have a complete understanding of what is involved in our being sanctified, being made holy, we need to know that there is a positive side to it as well. And this has to do with:

III. THE MEANS OF OUR SANCTIFICATION.

As in each part of salvation, we can never get away from salvation being a work of God, yet we have responsibilities in becoming holy as well. The Lord is doing the work in us, but He uses means. And the Lord spoke of those means in the text we are considering. He said, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth."

— We are sanctified by God, especially by God the Holy Spirit, but the means that He uses in our sanctification is *the Word of God*. In the Word of God we find the description of a holy character and a holy life. The Holy Spirit works in us, and then the changes begin to take shape outwardly in our daily living. But you will never find that a Christian can make any progress in living a holy life if he, or she, neglects the Word of

God. It is in the Word of God that we have the truth of God. It is in the Word that we are taught to trust the Lord. It is in the Word of God that we are told what a holy life is. It is in the Word of God that we are told how to be holy people. This is really the subject of all of Scripture as it applies to the people of God. It was that way in OT times, and it is the same in these NT times. When we live according to the Word of God, we will be holy people. It is there, and only there, that we find the real truth. We need to make sure that we are growing in our understanding of the Word of God, and then we will be in a position to test the truthfulness of what men try to tell us.

How we should treasure our Bibles! God has withstood all of the attempts that men have made to destroy it down through the years of time, and He continues to preserve it for us. Let us read it. Let us pray every day that the Lord will help us to understand it, and then to be able to apply it to our lives. That is where the real test is. Sanctification and the Word of God go hand in hand. Sanctification is impossible without the Word, and, on the other hand, the Christian who devotes himself to the careful study and application of Scripture, will find that he is being sanctified in heart and life. The goal of all holy living is to be like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Long ago, as Moses was delivering the Word of God to the people in his day, he expressed the purpose of God in giving His Word to His people when Moses told the people that the Lord had said,

7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.

8 And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you (Lev. 20:7-8).

And then the Holy Spirit directed the Apostle Peter to bring that same message, using some of the same words, over into the NT. This is what Peter wrote:

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

In this way the Holy Spirit was uniting the OT and the NT in their emphasis upon holiness in heart and life for all of the people of God.

Concl: What a lot of truth there is for us in this very brief verse. If we know the Lord, holiness should be the great objective we have for

ourselves, and it should be our objective as well as our prayer, for all those who are under our care in any way. Christ died not only to save us from the penalty of our sins, but He died to save us from the power of our sins. More than that, He died to save us from sinning. We will always be capable of sinning as long as we are in this life, but by the grace of God we can resist the temptation to sin, and can, as the Apostle Paul said, we can be busy each day, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

THE SANCTIFICATION OF CHRIST

John 17:18-19

— **Intro:** (Read the text.)

There is another verse in the Gospel John that has the same characteristics as the words in our text for tonight, and that verse is John 10:36:

Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Both verse Scriptures speak of sanctification, and both speak of being sent into the world. In the first passage the Lord said that He had been sanctified by the Father, and sent into the world. In the John 17 passage, the Lord had prayed for the sanctification of His disciples in verse 17, and then He spoke immediately of sending His disciples in the world, and said that this was the reason He had sanctified Himself, that His disciples "might be sanctified through the truth."

— So putting these all together, the Father sanctified the Son, the disciples were to sanctify themselves, and the Lord sanctified Himself that the disciples might be sanctified, and all of this was concerned with their separate, but related, ministries "in the world." These are very interesting thoughts, and very important ones, too.

In all four times that the word *sanctify* is used in the English text, it is the same word in the original Greek, the word ἁγιάζω. And this is the word that is associated with *holiness* in the NT. *To sanctify* is *to make holy*. But that does not exactly fit the Lord Jesus Christ because He is perfectly holy, always has been holy, and always will be holy. He was holy before He was born, holy after He was born, was holy all through His life, holy in His death, holy when He was raised from the dead, and holy when He ascended back to the Father, and He continues to be holy as He is not seated at the Father's right hand. When He comes again, He will still be the perfectly and infinitely holy Son of God.

— But it is not the same with us. Before we were saved we were not holy at all. After we were saved we were holy in our standing before God, but we were not holy in character or in living. Hopefully since that time we have grown in holiness, but we will not be finally holy until that day when we see the Lord in our glorified bodies.

— How then are we going to describe the use of this word especially as it applies to the Lord Jesus Christ?

We need to go back to the basic idea of ἀγιάζω. It mean *to set apart*. It carries with it the idea of a commission. The Lord Jesus was commissioned by the Father for the work that He was to do in the world, and then sent into the world to do that work.

In the same way the disciples were commissioned by God and by our Lord Jesus Christ to go into the world, but since they were not holy as the Lord is, it required that they sanctify themselves. But, the sanctification of the disciples required the sanctification of the Lord for the work that the Father had commissioned Him to do. And so the Lord devoted Himself to the completion of that work, His death on the Cross, because that work was the ground, the basis, upon which the disciples were to sanctify themselves.

As I mentioned last Sunday night it is by the work of Christ on the Cross that we are saved. And since salvation is made up of justification, and sanctification, and glorification, we need to realize that the only basis upon which the disciples, as well as we as believers today, can be sanctified, is on the basis of what Christ did for us when He died on the Cross. Without benefitting from the death of Christ on the Cross, all attempts on our part toward holiness would be mere human reformation. People who know nothing of salvation are engaged here and there in an attempt to change themselves, but this is not salvation. It is only through the work of Christ that sanctification is at all possible for us. This is the clear teaching of the NT. And it is not just the fact that Christ died, but that we were united with Him in His death. Since Christ died for us, we died in Him and with Him. His death brought the most glorious benefits to us, and holiness, or sanctification, is one of the most glorious of all.

So when in John 10:36 our Lord said that He had been sanctified by the Father, He meant that He had been set apart from all others and commissioned with bringing many sons to glory, as it is stated in Heb. 2. In fact, let me read to you from Heb. 2:9-11:

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

So here we see that it was necessary for the Lord Jesus to do His work in

order that His disciples could be sanctified, could be made holy.

So in the word *sanctify* we have two ideas. One is that of receiving a commission which must be fulfilled, and secondly, doing that which is involved in fulfilling the commission.

So let me repeat what I believe is the meaning of these two passages.

I. THE FATHER'S SANCTIFICATION OF HIS SON (John 10:36).

This means that the Father commissioned His Son to do a specific work, namely the salvation of those whom the Father had given to Him. He set His Son apart from all others. He alone was to bring salvation, and His work was to include all three phases of salvation: justification, sanctification, and glorification.

II. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST'S SANCTIFICATION OF HIMSELF (John 17:19a).

This means that the Lord Jesus was determined to go through with the work that the Father had sanctified Him to do, or, in other words, had commissioned Him to do. He knew why He had come into the world. His enemies would gladly have killed Him before He got to the Cross. But they could not touch Him because, as we read several times in John's Gospel, His hour "had not yet come." Even Peter had unknowingly taken the Devil's part when he declared that the Lord must not die. But nothing and nobody could dissuade the Lord from finishing the work which He had come into the world to do. He knew that to please the Father, this was what He had to do. And He also knew that if He did not finish His work, there was absolutely no hope for the salvation of sinners. So He set Himself apart, He sanctified Himself, to do the work which the Father had sent Him to do.

And notice that the Lord showed how dependent His disciples were on His sanctification, His fulfilling the work that God had given Him to do, because He went on to say, reading all of verse 19 together,

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth (John 17:19).

If Christ had not died, there would have been no possibility that you and I could ever have been sanctified. We would still be in our sins, hopelessly in bondage, and not really wanting it to be any different – at least, not as different as the Lord intended for it to be.

And now we come to the third sanctification.

III. THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE DISCIPLES (John 17:17, 19).

Let us look again at verse 19. (Read.)

Notice how dependent the disciples were upon the sanctification of Christ. If Christ had not fulfilled the commission which the Father had given Him, it would have been meaningless to speak to the disciples, or to any person from that day to this, about sanctification. But because He died for us and forever broke us loose from the bondage of sin, therefore, we can be sanctified. And as each of us struggle with our own personal sanctification, let us never lose sight of the Cross of Christ. That is one reason we observed the Lord's Supper today. We examine ourselves, confess our sins, and believe that we are forgiven because of the shed blood of Christ, and this encourages us to believe that we can grow in holiness because of what our Lord did in His death on the Cross.

But now with regard to our sanctification, let me say that we, too, are unto a divine commission from God. His commission was to die for us. Our commission is to be holy as God is holy. So sanctification is not optional for us; it is a requirement. But it is a requirement in which we trust in the work of Christ on the Cross, and yet we have responsibilities in it, too. The Lord was set apart by the Father to do the work that the Father sent Him to do, but He had to set Himself apart to finish that work. And it is when Christ set Himself to do the Father's will on the Cross, this is what makes it possible for us, using the means that God has given to us, to fulfill our commission to be holy.

To state all of this using the words of our text:

- 1) The Father sanctified His Son.
- 2) The Lord Jesus sanctified Himself.
- 3) We are commissioned by God to sanctify ourselves through the sanctification of Christ.

Now I am going back to some of the things I mentioned last Sunday night about the Lord's commission to us as stated in John 17:17. And I hope that by what we have seen in this prayer tonight, as well as in John 10:36, that we see that the effectiveness of our efforts rests ultimately upon the sanctification of Christ, *i.e.*, the way He fulfilled the commission that God had given Him.

In John 17:17 the Lord said, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth."

— Here the Lord was presenting a request to the Father that the Father would enable them to fulfill their commission by being sanctified. I repeat, sanctification is a work of God, but we have responsibilities in it. Our sanctification rests upon the work of Christ, but it is realized in our lives through the Word of God.

This means that we need to read the Word. We need to understand the Word. And this calls for earnest, importunate prayer. And finally we must obey the Word of God. A holy life, and by that I mean *a life pleasing to God*, is only possible through the Word of God. That is why the Lord has given it to us, and that is why He has preserved it for us. That is also why He has given us the Holy Spirit to be our Teacher, and to guide us into all of the truth. *God has sent His Son to die for us in order that we might become a holy people.* This is our sanctification. This is our commission.

But now let me raise the question,

— **IV. WHY IS OUR SANCTIFICATION SO IMPORTANT?**

Obviously it is important because this is the reason that the Lord has saved us. And it is important because this is the way for a growing fellowship with the Lord. But what did our Lord mention as the reason when He was praying to the Father? At this point I want us to go back to verse 18. We have been talking all around that verse, but now let us consider it. (Read John 17:18.)

The Lord had come to the point where He was completing the work which the Father had given Him to do. After He died and rose again, it would be only a short time when He would return to His Father in heaven. *Then what would become of the disciples? The same question applies to us. After we are saved we know that we need to grow to be like Christ, this is our sanctification. But why, in this connection, did the Lord say that He was sending His disciples into the world just as He had been sent into the world?*

— You see, we need to be holy, to be sanctified, to fulfill our commission from the Lord not only to please God and to please our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, but in order that we might have a witness in this ungodly

world. The Lord Jesus recognized fully what a wicked place this world is. He knew that it was under the domination of the Evil One, the Devil. But He also knew two other things that are important at this point in His prayer:

- 1) He knew that the more the disciples sought to be holy, the safer they would be in this world.
- 2) He knew that the greatest testimony that His people could possibly have in this wicked world, would be the testimony of a godly life.

Most of you have probably heard of Mr. E.M. Bounds book, *Power Through Prayer*. In that book he makes a statement that we used to hear quoted quite often, but it has been a long time since I have heard anyone mention it. Maybe its because there is so little interest today among professing Christians in a holy life. Here is his statement:

Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.

And he added a little later in the same chapter:

When Paul appeals to the character of the men who rooted the gospel in the world, he solves the mystery of their success.

And Mr. Bounds believed that prayer was a great factor in making the servants of the Lord holy and mighty instruments in this world. And so let me read one more quotation from him:

What the Church needs today is not more machinery, or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Spirit uses—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer.

Concl: We live in a terribly godless world. Things are not getting better, but they are getting worse. And they are out of control. And in the midst of this situation we have the professing church which frantically is taking up most of the world's methods in the hope of reaching people in the world, and changing them. But why do they need to change if we are seeking to be as much like them as we can. The Lord Jesus was indicating in the words before us tonight that the greatest need of the church is personal holiness. Instead of seeking to be like the world, we need to be seeking to be like God, and like Christ. Then and only then will the church again be a mighty force in the world. It is our difference from the world that God uses us to awaken sinners out of their sleep so that they will realize that it is God Whom they need, and that the only way they can go to God is through Jesus Christ, His Son, Who sanctified Himself to the work that the Father had called Him to do, that He might produce holy

men, who, in turn, would live in this world in such a way that people would begin to ask us for a reason for the hope that is in us.

Have you noticed how often in the Psalms David prayed that the Lord would show him His way? That is what the Lord was speaking about in His prayer to the Father.

After David had sinned so grievously against the Lord, in confessing his sins and seeking restoration to the fellowship of the Lord, he said this in his prayer of confession:

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee (Psa. 51:12-13).

David knew that only a holy life can be an effective instrument in the hand of the Lord in not only teaching transgressors the ways of the Lord, but in also seeing them converted to God.

May God make us a holy people that we, too, may become more powerful instruments in His hands in this world which shows that our only hope is Christ.

LOOKING AHEAD BY PRAYER

John 17:20-23

Intro: In our study of John 17 thus far we have seen that the Lord began

His prayer by praying for Himself. This part of the prayer occupies the first five verses. The second part of the prayer had to do with those who were His disciples then. He described them as "the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world" (v. 6). Now as we come to verse 20 we see that the Lord was expanding His prayer to those "also which shall believe on Me through their word." And so it is for all future believers that he prayed in this last part. And so let us call this,

I. THE EXPANSION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER (John 17:20).

It is from verse 6 on that we can refer to this prayer as *intercessory prayer*. And, as I have just described, the Lord prayed for those who were His disciples then, and at this point in verse 20 He was looking ahead to all who would ever believe in Him in the future, but our Lord described that group as being the fruit of the group of disciples who were with Him at the time that He prayed this prayer.

Most of us, I trust, pray for believers we know, beginning with our families, and then expanding our prayers to include people we do not know. I pray for people I have never met, and for many people I don't know very well. I pray for people I see regularly, but I also pray for people I have not seen for years. It is interesting to think how the Lord has led each one of us in our praying.

Now as far as future believers are concerned, my prayers are usually limited to babies born in our families, or people I know now who are not believers. Little Connor has recently been added to my prayer list, and I can honestly say that I started to pray for him before he was born. But I believe that the Lord was very unique in His praying when He extended His prayer to include all future believers. With the way things are going in the world today, I wonder what things will be like when our grandchildren are my age (if the Lord delays His coming that long). And equally with the way things are going in the church today, I have wondered what the church will be like just a few years ahead. But to broaden my prayers out to include all future believers, I have to say that I have never prayed that way.

But this is the way our Lord prayed here in the latter part of this most

wonderful prayer. I repeat, He prayed for "them also which shall believe on Me through their word." I like that word "also" in their because it suggests that He would not stop praying for those who were His disciples then. He carried all of the people that the Lord had given Him upon His heart, those who had been saved, and those whom He knew would be saved in the future.

Now will you notice that this statement our Lord made in verse 20 assumes that the Father would answer His prayer for those who were His disciples at that time. That in itself is a most comforting thought. As the Lord was arrested, tried, condemned to death, and crucified, the reading of the four Gospels gives us the impression that they were not a strong group at all. In fact, it was their leader, the Apostle Peter, who denied with curses and oaths that he even knew the Lord. And the Lord was well acquainted with their weaknesses. He knew places in their lives which were weak which they had not yet discovered. But He was equally confident that He would continue to work in their hearts to make them strong. And He knew that they would become bold in their testimony for Christ, and that they would be fruitful in their witness of the Gospel. Note again our Lord's words: "Them that shall believe on me through their words."

So the work of the Lord was not going to die, but it was going to continue on until every person whom the Father had given to Him in every generation was saved! Without Him, those disciples could do nothing, but with Him they would, as their enemies confessed later in Thessalonica, turn the world upside down. Cf. Acts 17:6.

Did you ever stop to realize that we are all the spiritual descendants of those early apostles? People spend a lot of time and money tracing their family history here on earth, but what about our spiritual ancestors?

Years ago when I was a young man I attended a Navigator conference at Hume Lake in California. We have three children then, and Lucille's folks were leaving their home in Harrisburg, Arkansas to move to California. Her Dad who had been a rice miller, had sold his mill, and was retiring. So Lucille took Dwight and John and Carolyn on a train, and went to Harrisburg while I went to Hume Lake. One night Dawson Trotman was speaking, and emphasizing the importance of witnessing for Christ, when he called on five or six men to stand where they were in the meeting. I don't remember their names, but to explain to you what he did, he pointed to one man and said that he had the joy of leading him to

— Christ. Let's say that his name was Sam. And then he pointed to another, and said that Sam led Bill to Christ. And then he pointed to still another and said that Bill led Joe to Christ. And Daws went on and we began to realize that right there in that meeting were five or six generations in the family of God, and Daws was a great great great grandfather (depending upon how many men were there).

That started me thinking about my own spiritual heritage. I can't go very far back, and there may be many times when the Lord had to fill in the blanks as He did with Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus when the Lord intervened personally. But just think, that has been going on generation after generation, and will continue to go on until the Lord comes. If the work had been dependent upon us, it would have stopped long ago. But it is not dependent upon us. The Lord may use us as His instruments in reaching others, but the work is His, and He gets all of the glory.

— So the Lord was doing what we cannot do. He was in that moment looking down through the years to come, seeing those who would believe, and praying for them. And, while we never know who is going to be saved, we can pray for the coming generations of believers just as our Lord did. It is sad that we do not pray more than we do because there is no limit to the outreach that we have in prayer.

We all need encouragement in prayer because it sometimes seems that we see so little in answer to our prayers. But just think how the prayers of the Lord Jesus have carried His work down to this present hour. When you study church history and see all of the troubles the Lord's people have faced from that day to this, and all of the troubles that the Lord's people have brought on themselves, only the Lord is deserving of the glory that the work still goes on. So I trust that you are encouraged to see how our Lord prayed, and that you and I will enlarge our praying along the same lines. Basically it is because of this prayer of our Lord, and the way He has continued to pray this way at the Father's right hand, that you and I have been saved. The enemies of the Gospel have never really succeeded in a permanent way because of the prayers of the Lord Jesus. The church has suffered some severe setbacks, but the work has never stopped.

— But let me point out another fact about verse 20 that should be of interest to all of us. It has to do with the word "pray."

The Lord used this word to describe what He had been doing for His disciples, and at this point we see that this is what He was doing as He

prayed for all future believers.

It is the Greek verb ἐρωτάω. If you are making notes, the English equivalent would be e-r-o-t-a-o, with the accent on the "a." It is one of the Greek words which is used for prayer, *but the significant thing about this verb is that it is never used of man's prayer to God*. There is one possible exception, and that is in 1 John 5:16, but even there it probably means that no one can pray for a person who has committed a sin unto death with any assurance that the prayer would be answered as if the Lord were praying for him. So this is not really an exception after all.

But what is unique about this word ἐρωτάω? Let me cite a Greek authority in giving you the answer. This is what Archbishop Trench said in his book, *Synonyms of the New Testament*:

It implies that he who asks stands on a certain footing of equality with him from whom the boon is asked, as king with king (Luke xiv. 32), or, if not equality, on such a footing of familiarity as lends authority to the request (p. 145).

We have an illustration of how this word will operate in the book of Esther which we have just completed in our Sunday School lessons. Why was it that Mordecai wanted Esther to go on to seek help from the King to spare the lives of the Jews? It was because, as the Queen she would have the greatest influence with the King – more than any other person. And in the King's reaction, we see that Mordecai was right. Esther knew that she was risking her life to go into King Ahasuerus because anyone who went into the King without being called could be put to death *unless the King were to hold out his golden scepter to him or her*. But she went in, and the King held out his scepter. But the significant thing was what the King said. Even before he knew what Esther wanted, he said this:

What wilt thou, queen Esther? And what is thy request? It shall be even given to the half of the kingdom (Esther 5:3).

This was ἐρωτάω praying! She was the King's wife, the Queen, and she could make a request of him as being on an equal basis with him, *but also with a strong expectation that her request would be granted*. And it was!

This is why ἐρωτάω belongs to the Lord's prayers, and not to ours. Do you remember what the Lord said as He approached the tomb where Lazarus was buried. Let me read the passage to you. It is found in John 11:41-44:

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I

thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Notice those words at the end of verse 41 and the beginning of verse 42.

The Lord said something here that you and I cannot say. The Apostle John said that "if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." But if we do not ask according to His will, He is under no obligation to answer us. But the Lord Jesus, being the Son of God, and equal with the Father, never prays a prayer that is not according to God's will, and therefore He is always heard, and the answer is sure to be given.

How wonderful it is that the Lord said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." And He used the verb, ἐρωτάω!

Think of that when you read Rom. 8:26 and 27

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

You see, the Holy Spirit is on equal ground with the Father, and so His prayers are always effective.

And then later on in the same chapter, we read in verses 33 and 34:

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

And I can't pass by those comforting words in Heb. 7:25:

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The Father always hears the Son. And the Father always hears the Holy Spirit. Their prayers are always acceptable to the Father. And the precious fact we learn from all of these Scriptures is that the Lord Jesus continues to pray for us, and the Holy Spirit is engaged in the same ministry for us. How unthinkable it is, then, that the work of the Lord could ever fail! It cannot fail because the Son prays for us, and the Holy Spirit prays for us, and the Father not only listens to what They say, but their prayers are always answered.

How blessed the believers at the end of the first century must have been when they had the opportunity of reading these words for the first time! But how blessed we should be to read them even now because, as I have been speaking, our Lord has been praying, and you and I are experiencing the blessings which our Savior is seeking for us.

Remember this every day, but remember this truth especially in times of testing and of need.

I am not going to be able to finish these four verses tonight, but we will get to them later if the Lord does not come, and if He spares me. But I want to anticipate what is coming. And so let us just notice:

II. THE LORD'S FIRST REQUEST FOR ALL FUTURE BELIEVERS (John 17:21a).

The Lord prays for us individually, and He prays for us as His church. What would you think would be uppermost on His heart even as He prays for us tonight, and for all of His people in our generation?

I am sure that there are many things upon the Lord's heart as He thinks of me tonight, and as He thinks of you. And He is always thinking of us! Would you expect what is here in verse 21? Probably none of us would have expected this request unless we had known how He prayed for those who were His disciples when He was here on earth. You find His request for them in Verse 11b. And His request for us is the same. (Read vv. 11b and 21.) Our relationship to each other is to be a reflection of the oneness that exists between the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this has an application to us as members of the body of Christ, but it has to start with each one of us individually. And that is what we will get into when we come back to John 17 a couple of weeks from now. And I trust that it will be a great blessing for all of us.

Concl: In the meantime, let us rejoice and thank God that in His sovereign plan for our salvation, we have a Savior Who is never-ceasing in His praying for us. And let us follow His example, by faithfully praying for ourselves as He prayed for Himself, and then praying for each other that the purposes of God might be fully realized in each one of our lives. Pray for those who in the years to come until our Lord returns, will be believing in Christ through the testimony that is being passed down to them as you and I speak to others about our wonderful Savior.

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THE LORD'S BURDEN FOR ALL BELIEVERS

John 17:20-23

Intro: I have been pointing out to you ever since we started our study of John 17 that there are three divisions in the prayer:

- 1) Our Lord prayed for Himself in vv. 1-5.
- 2) He prayed for those who were His disciples at the time that He prayed.
The verses devoted to this part of His prayer are vv. 6-19.
- 3) In verses 20-26 He was praying for all future believers.

As we come again tonight to verses 20-23 we need to be impressed with the fact that the request that the Lord made in these verses, is the same request that He prayed for those who were His disciples then. It is simply, "That they may be one, as we are" (v. 11b). (Read the second time this request appears in vv. 21-23.)

We all must agree that for the Lord to present the same request for the two groups of disciples, makes this an extremely important request. And yet what makes it such a difficult request to explain is that we are all so different! Even those first disciples, even though they were all Jewish, and all had been brought up in much the same way, and all spoke the same language, yet they were very different! But when you look at the church as it began to spread through the Roman world, and on until today when it is literally all over the world, including as it does people from different nations, with different backgrounds, speaking different languages, and with widely different abilities, what was it that the Lord had in mind? (Read vv. 21 and 23 again.)

David Brown recognized the problem that we are up against in explaining a passage like this when he wrote in his comments on John 17,

No language which we at present have can adequately express the full import of these wonderful words, nor can any heart here below completely conceive it.

However, this did not stop him from trying to explain their meaning, and that is what we all must do. If it is in the Word, it is important, and for it to be repeated, as I have said, makes it *very* important, and besides we have the Holy Spirit to teach us and to guide us into the truth.

One important rule for interpreting Scripture is that we are to interpret Scripture with Scripture. This is one reason that we emphasize the importance of reading the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation. The more we do this, the more familiar we get with finding one passage which will

shed like upon another passage.

On this particular subject we may recall that the Lord Jesus referred to a oneness that exists between Himself and the Father in heaven, when He said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). That is one great unity which we find expressed even in this prayer. Our Lord prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee" (John 17:21). However, here in John 17 there is not only the idea of oneness, but of union. The Father was in Christ, and Christ was in the Father. And the Lord's prayer was, "That they also may be one in Us." So it is not just oneness, but union.

The same is true in verse 23: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."

Between that first statement in John 10:30, and this prayer in John 17, the Lord had given His disciples what we call *The Upper Room Discourse* even though it was not all given in the Upper Room. His message to them began in the Upper Room, but it continued as they left the Upper Room at the end of John 14, and made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. And it was especially in the fifteenth chapter that the Lord got into the subject of a union which exists between His people and Himself. You will remember that He illustrated it with the relationship that a vine has with its branches. This is a truth which is distinctive with the Christian faith. In other religions, such as Mohammedanism, Mohammed may be a great inspiration to his followers, but there is no way in which it can be said that he is in every Muslim, and every Muslim is in him. But this is true of us as Christians. We are in Christ (this is what it takes to be saved), and Christ is in us. Paul described what it means to be a Christian when he wrote,

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17). No can be saved without being "in Christ." We don't put ourselves there, but God puts us in Christ.

In that same fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians the Apostle Paul went on to say,
19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

Paul described the Christian life as one in which Christ was actually living in us:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

And you will remember what he said about Christ and us as believers in Col. 3:4:

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

I repeat, this is truth that is unique to the Christian faith, and it is unique because we are the only people who have a living God, and living Lord Jesus Christ, and living Holy Spirit.

So this truth has to be at the foundation of what the Lord Jesus was praying about here.

However, there are many Christians who do not *know* about this relationship that we all have with the Members of the Godhead, and there are many others, perhaps most of us, who do not really participate in this oneness. And this accounts for the lack of oneness that there is among us as the people of God.

As David Brown (and I am sure many others) have pointed out, there are three unities which our Lord recognized:

- 1) The unity between the Father and the Son,
- 2) The unity between Christ and each believer.
- 3) The unity between believers.

And yet the reality of these relationship as far as we are concerned, differ according to the relationship which each of us has with the Lord. The oneness between the Father and Christ is perfect, but our relationship with Christ, and our relationship with each other in Christ, needs perfecting.

During the holidays Lucille and I got a mailing from *The Evangelical Institute of Greenville, S. C.* in which they enclosed what is called, *A Morning Act of Faith*, written by Handley Moule. Anyone who has used Bishop Moule's commentaries (and I am one of them) quickly learns that anything which he has written is well worth reading *and remembering!*

Bishop Moule suggested that we begin each day saying this:

I believe on the Name of the Son of God.
Therefore I am IN HIM, having redemption
Through His blood and Life by

His Spirit.
And He is IN ME, and all fulness is in
Him.
To Him I belong, by purchase, conquest,
and self-surrender.
To me He belongs, for all my hourly
need.
There is no cloud between my Lord and
me.
THERE IS NO DIFFICULTY, INWARD
OR OUTWARD, WHICH HE IS NOT
READY TO MEET IN ME TODAY.
The Lord is my Keeper. Amen.

Now I realize that just saying something like this, doesn't necessarily make it true for us. But perhaps even reading something like this over and over, morning after morning, will help us to remember our union with Christ, and what that union needs to mean in our daily lives.

The Lord was praying that we all would be one, we who believe in Christ. And furthermore that that oneness would reflect the oneness which exists between the Father and Christ. And that we would be one in Them.

So this means that our oneness with each other as believers is dependent upon the oneness that each one of us has with Christ and with our heavenly Father. This is the only way our oneness can be perfected, that is, made complete. And furthermore, looking at the words which the Lord used when He made this request in verse 11, this oneness between us requires that it be *kept, guarded, made secure*, by the Father. So it is not something that we do for ourselves, but it is that which we depend upon the Father to do for us and in us.

Now there are many aspects to this oneness, but what we want to know tonight is *what aspect of this oneness did the Lord Jesus have as He prayed this prayer?* Well, the verses themselves should give us a clue.

And what we find in these verses – verses 21 and 23?

We find that in both verses the Lord was concerned that the world would believe and learn something very, very important.

In verse 21 the Lord expressed it this way: "That the world may believe

that Thou didst send Me." In verse 23 our Lord prayed, "That the world may know that Thou has sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."

As usual, when the Lord referred to the world, He was not saying that every person in the world would believe and know and be saved – because salvation is always the result of such understanding. No, the Lord did not mean that, but He meant that there would be people in the world who would be reached with the good news of salvation if His people, you and I, would only walk in such fellowship with Him, that the very character of our lives, our holy behavior, would cause them in many instances to ask, as the Apostle Peter has taught us, "a reason for the hope that is in us." Cf. 1 Pet. 3:15:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

The other day I got a letter from an evangelist who is well-known, saying that he was going to have a crusade in Portland next year. But what grieved me most was that he listed the names of a lot of contemporary musicians who were going to have part, and I know that they were the kind who could give us the world's music somehow dressed up to look a little like it was Christian music. When are we going to learn that the most powerful witness we have is the witness of godliness. We are so afraid that we are going to offend people that we try to be just as much like the world as we can. People respond to this kind of a program, but what about the Holy Spirit. What we need to be doing is reading our Bibles to learn how man and women in Scripture touched their generations for God. And you will always find that it was their walk with the Lord that God used to touch the hearts of lost sinners. That, I believe, is what our Lord was talking about in these verses.

The first reason we need to be godly is because this is what pleases God. The second reason is for our own edification. But the third reason is that this is the basis of our witness to the world. If the Lord's people today would only seek to please Him, and forget about pleasing the world, only God knows what the results would be. And one of the good things about this is that it doesn't take hundreds of thousands of dollars to do it. Just take your Bible, read it, and seek God's grace to obey it, and we would begin to see real oneness among believers, and a mighty impact among the people of the world. When the Lord Jesus said, as we read in John 10:30, "I and my Father are one," the context shows that the oneness that He was

talking about was that of seeking lost sheep, saving them, and then keeping them for all eternity. We need that same oneness of purpose among us. And this is how we will be drawn closer to the Lord.

But before I close, let me say a word about verse 22 which I have passed over up to this point. (Read v. 22.)

Do you remember how the Lord prayed for Himself in the first five verses of this prayer? It all had to do with glory. Glory is the manifestation of God. That glory was veiled while the Lord was here on earth, but from time to time it was seen. It was seen when the Lord performed His miracles. It was seen by Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. For a moment it caused the men who came to arrest our Lord to fall back on the ground.

But what did the Lord say about His glory here in verse 22? He had given this glory to those who believe on Him! Why? "That they may be one, even as We are one."

Link this with 2 Cor. 3:18:

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

And if you go on reading in 2 Corinthians 4 you will see that Paul calls what he had been writing about, "this ministry."

Concl: To be one with each other, we must be one with Christ. And to be one with Christ is to be one with God. This oneness is our glory because it means walking in fellowship with the Lord. And there can really be no fellowship with the Lord unless we are being obedient to the Word of God. That is what the Lord saw as the greatest need of His disciples who were with Him then. And, as He prayed for all of us who would believe on Him through their word, He saw that this was the great need of all future generations of believers.

There is so much more than could be said on this glorious subject of unity, but let us remember that our oneness is primarily with Christ, and it is our oneness with Him that brings us into oneness with each other. I am ready to say that oneness means fellowship, and fellowship with Christ is what makes us more and more like our precious Savior. Oh, that we might live in such fellowship with our Lord in the coming year that people would take knowledge of us, like they did of the early Christians, that we have

been with Jesus.

I close by reading Psalm 133:

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

OUR LORD'S CROWNING REQUEST

John 17:24

Intro: When I speak of this as *Our Lord's Crowning Request*, I mean that this is the request toward which all of the others look. It is the request without which the others would be incomplete. After all, what is the purpose of our Lord's glorification if it is not for us. And why did He pray that we might be kept to experience true oneness if it were not in anticipation of the day when we would be with Him. The same is true of our Lord's prayer that we might be kept from the Evil One, as well as for our ultimate and total sanctification. The whole prayer is designed for that glorious day when we will be "forever with the Lord." Anything less than the fulfillment of all of our Lord's requests would keep that day from being the glorious experience that God has planned that it shall be.

Think of it! We are going to be "with the Lord"! But we need to be prepared for that glorious event. And that was the purpose of this, our Lord's prayer, and finally being "with Him" is the glorious culmination of our salvation.

Notice first,

I. THE ONE TO WHOM THE REQUEST IS DIRECTED.

It is the same Person to Whom our Lord was praying throughout this prayer. See vv. 1, 5, 11, 21, here in 24, and 25. He is the God Who spoke from heaven, claiming that Jesus was His Son, His beloved Son, His Son in Whom He found all of His delight. While God is the Father of all those who have been given to His Son, yet we are not at all in the same relationship, the eternal relationship, which our Lord has had with the God of heaven and earth.

"Father" not only shows our Lord's relationship to God, but it is a term of endearment. No one can possibly measure the love that the Father has for His Son, Jesus Christ, nor the love that the Son, Jesus Christ, has for His Father in heaven. Together they had, with the Holy Spirit, planned our redemption. And now the Lord Jesus in His prayer is contemplating and anticipating with the greatest joy the climax of it all. And, as I have tried to bring out, the Lord Jesus has anticipated the needs of His people in preparation for that glorious day. This, too, had been a part of the divine plan, and yet here we find our Lord petitioning the Father regarding the completion of that work. To pray for that which is obviously according to

the will of God, shows our awareness of what God has promised to do, and our assurance that God will not only do what He has planned to do, but that He has the power and wisdom in every case to see that the work is done.

The Lord told His disciples that when they prayed, they were to say, "Our Father." Those are the words that give us a hearing in heaven, and in our Lord's humanity it was the same with Him.

When the Lord went to the grave of His friend Lazarus who had died four days earlier, you will remember what our Lord prayed. The account is found in John 11:41-45. The Lord had told those present to take the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. Then this followed:

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

May we learn that although there are many ways we can and often may address God, yet apparently nothing touches His heart as much as when we simply say, "Father," like our Lord did. And no one really has a right to address God in that way except those of us who are in His family.

But notice secondly,

II. THE POWER OF HIS PRAYER.

His prayer was not only powerful because it was His prayer, but also by the use of the words, "I will."

Many expositors have tried to weak this request as though it were merely a wish that the Son had and which He was presenting to the Father in the same way that you and I would pray. But this is the powerful "I will" of

the Son of God! Before our Lord had said, "I pray" (John 17:9 [2x], 15, and 20). But here in verse 24 He said, "I will." The contrast with His previous expressions serves to make this stand out and to give it its most powerful meaning. He Who never was at odds with His Father, He Who knew the will of the Father and claimed that will as His own, now presents His request to His Father indicating that with the fulfillment of the work that the Father had sent Him to do, everything was now ready for the completion of the work of salvation.

Spurgeon said, "I love that opening to the prayer [meaning this petition], it is a blessed guarantee of its fulfillment, rendering it so sure that we may now look upon Christ's prayer as a promise which shall be assuredly fulfilled" (IV, 186).

Our Lord's words here in John 17:24 are comparable to His word recorded for us in Matt. 8:2-3. You will remember these words.

2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him,
saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I
will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Our next point has to be:

III. THOSE FOR WHOM HE PRAYED.

It was not for every Jew. Nor was it for every Gentile. It was only for those, as He said, "whom Thou hast given Me." This is not the first time we have had this expression in this prayer, is it? Cf. vv. 2, 6-8, 9, 11, 12, and here in v. 24. How the Lord seems to delight in speaking of the people of God in this way. And it ought to be a blessing to us every time we read these verses, or any other passage of Scripture which speaks of our divine election to salvation.

In the final analysis, you and I did not take the initiative in giving ourselves to Christ. No, the Father gave us to His Son, and gave us the faith to trust Him for our salvation. And let me say that everything in this world, just as everything in this prayer, has to do with what God is doing in the lives of those whom in eternity past He gave to His Son to be saved. Some who have been given to the Lord Jesus are yet to be saved, and that is why we are still here. The presidents and kings and politicians think that what they are doing is determining the course of world history. But it is not that way at all. The primary work of God in the earth is that He is

calling out a people for His own Name, the people who were ordained before the foundation of the world to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. In our newspapers and history books we see things the way men think that they are. But in the Word of God we learn what is really important in world affairs, and it always has to do with the work of the Gospel in the hearts of those whom the Father has given to His Son.

The more I think about this expression, the more I am amazed at it. When you think of how much the Father loves the Son, and how He would delight to please the Son, isn't it amazing that God should please His Son by giving you and me and all other believers to Christ, and that Christ should be as pleased with God's gift as He obviously was when He prayed this prayer. If you and I recognize this great truth, we will never again be concerned about how permanent our salvation is.

But let us go on. We come now to:

IV. OUR LORD'S CROWNING REQUEST.

Actually there are two. The first leads to the second, but it is impossible to separate them. If you and I experience the first of these two requests, you can be sure that we will experience the second part as well.

The first is:

A. "That they also ... be with me where I am."

For millions upon millions of the Lord's people this has already taken place. They have gone to heaven through death, and we know that to be absent from the body, for a child of God, is to be present with the Lord. Read 2 Cor. 5. And the Apostle Paul told the Philippian believers that "to depart and be with Christ is far better." Read Philippians 1.

Illus: The death of Dean Brooten at the Hospice House.

The Lord had comforted the disciples with this truth at the beginning of his message to them in the Upper Room. Cf. John 14:1-3.

I have mentioned this to many of you before, but let me remind you again that the Bible speaks of the place where we go after death, not just as heaven, but as wherever it is that the Lord is.

We want to have our loved ones with us, and we grieve, and grieve deeply, when they are taken from us. When the Lord departed from this earth, He was looking forward to His return because He wanted to take His beloved people to be with Him in heaven. Psa. 116:15 tells us, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." It is not that He is pleased to see us go through what we often have to go through when we die. Nor is it that He enjoys seeing our loved ones grieve when we go. But it is that we are simply coming home when we go to be with the Lord. And so our Lord prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am."

But why? Here is the second part of the request.

B. "That they may behold my glory."

Now do you see why I said at the beginning that even when our Lord was praying for Himself in the first five verses of this chapter, He had us in mind. He wanted to be glorified because He wanted us to see His glory.

Now there something very special in all of this. Even here on earth we are to be "looking unto Jesus," aren't we? But the only way we can see the Lord now, is as we see Him in the Word. And He is the One we always need to be looking for as we read our Bibles – whether in the OT or in the NT. And I hope you remember what I pointed out a short time ago from 2 Cor. 3:18. The Word of God has reflective powers. As we look at the Lord in the Word, the Spirit of God uses those times to change us by degrees to become more and more like Christ.

But what is going to happen to every one of us when we see the Lord in heaven. The Apostle John has made that very clear in the first three verses of 1 John 3. Listen to them as I read them to you.

- 1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.
- 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.
- 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:1-3).

To behold the Lord in His resurrection glory will be the final phase of our salvation for then "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Ever since you and I first came to know the Savior, the Lord has been working on this great and glorious purpose. The ultimate purpose of our salvation is not just to get us to heaven, as wonderful as that will be! No, the main purpose of our salvation is to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are reading your Bible through this year, you recently read that God created man in His own image and likeness. That likeness is still there in some ways, but it has been marred by sin. But this is what the Apostle Paul had to say about our salvation in Rom. 8:28-30:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:28-30).

We are not only going to be "with the Lord," but we are going to be "like Him." We are going to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

But we still have one part of the verse left.

V. THE PURPOSE BEHIND THE REQUEST.

Note the words, "for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." What does this have to do with what the Lord had been saying in this request?

We can only look back into eternity past through the pages of Scripture. It is there that we learn that we were chosen before creation itself. That was when God set His love upon us, and ordained that we would be saved. But before God loved us, He loved His Son, He delighted in His Son. We cannot express in words the complete delight that the Father had in His Son. It was infinite, unstained in any way. So, when God determined what the ultimate objective of salvation would be, He determined that He would choose those whom He would redeem, and make them all just like His Son. In that way, He can delight Himself in us because now we are in Christ, and ordained to become just like Christ.

I have told many of you what Dr. Chafer used to tell us in our seminary

classrooms. I heard him say it more than once, many time. His comment went like this: "God is so delighted in His Son, that He is going to fill heaven with people who are just like He is."

I think this is what the Lord had in mind as He prayed this final request in His prayer. In effect He was saying, "I want the people you have given to Me, and in whose hearts you have been working since the day you saved them, to be in heaven with Me so they can behold my glory, because that is the way My glory can transform them to be made like Me."

Concl: The people of the world have no idea as to what God is doing in the hearts and lives of His people. And we are partly to blame because we fail so often to behave like the people of God should behave. That is why we need to be walking in daily fellowship with the Lord now, looking daily at Him as He is revealed in the Word. Only then will people in the world believe that there is anything to the faith that we profess to have in the Lord Jesus Christ. But we can all thank God, as I told David Johnson this morning, that God, Who has begun this good work of salvation in our hearts, will not give up on any of us, but He will continue to work in us as long as we live here on earth, and when we get to heaven and actually see our Lord, then "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Let us pray daily for the grace to be faithful to the calling we have in Christ.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

John 17:25-26

Intro: It has occurred to me as I have studied again this most marvelous of all prayers, that in some respects this prayer took on the nature of our Savior's report to the Father. He had come to do the Father's will. That is clear from verses like John 6:38:

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

And so we see what the Son of God said to His Father as we read it in verse 4 of John 17. (Read.) See also verse 6. (Read.) Then look at verse 8. (Read.) Follow this with verse 12. (Read.) Then verse 14. (Read.) Verse 18 falls into the same category. (Read.) Nor can we overlook verse 22.

The same is true of our text for this evening: verses 25 and 26. (Read.)

Now there are some very important lessons for us in seeing how our Lord prayed as the time of His death was drawing near. In a lesser sense, but still the same principle applies. It is our main purpose in life to do the will of God right where we are. Our lives and our work does not measure up in importance to that of our Lord, but, nevertheless, we are bound by the same obligation to do the will of God. But here is the point. *We will find it most beneficial for ourselves if we learn to pray to the Lord about the work that He has given us to do!* How wonderful if it can be said of us, as it was said, *e.g.*, of King David by the Apostle Paul in Acts 13:36, especially the first part of the verse: "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep ..." This means that after he had done the work the Lord called him to do, he died. His work was finished.

This was true of our Lord to an infinitely greater degree, and here in John 17, as He prayed to His Father, He was reporting that His mission for coming to the earth was accomplished!

Perhaps it would help us to keep our lives and our work focused upon the will of God for us if we would form the habit of talking to the Lord, *i.e.*, praying about our work. As in everything else we do, none of us has a perfect record, but our Lord has set an important example for us in this, His high priestly prayer.

We have an example of this in the relationship that the apostles had with

our Lord while He was here on earth. Cf. Mark 6:30:

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

Not only should this be done by every pastor at the end of each Lord's Day, and by all who are teaching the Word of God, but it ought to be the habit we all have for every day. It would tend to make us more diligent and faithful, and also it would show us how much more we need to trust the Lord in the work that the Lord has given us to do.

As far as the Lord is concerned, let us notice, as we begin with these last two verses, how our Lord addressed His Father. He called Him:

I. "O RIGHTEOUS FATHER" (John 17:25a).

Thomas Manton, one of the Puritans, made a lengthy exposition of John 17 which can be found in his collected works. He made this comment with respect to the titles which are given to God in the Word: "Always titles of God are suited to the matter in hand" (II, 114).

As hard as it may be for us to understand how the Son of God was dependent upon the Father during the course of His earthly ministry, yet He was just that! All that our Lord did He did in the Father's Name. "God was in Christ" during the whole time of His ministry on earth, and this explains why the Lord spent so much of His time here on earth, often whole nights, in prayer. So, when He said, "O righteous Father," our Lord was declaring that the righteousness of the Father could be observed in all that the Son did while He was here on earth!

What can we say was the situation on earth as the Lord approached the end of His work on earth? Our Lord mentioned three things:

- 1) "The world hath not known Thee."
- 2) "But I have known Thee."
- 3) "And these [speaking of His disciples] have known that Thou hast sent Me."

The righteousness of God the Father was evident in all three of these conditions of which He spoke.

A. "The world hath not known Thee" (John 17:25a).

People are often disturbed over the doctrine of election because they say

that such a doctrine would mean that *God is not fair*. The Lord Jesus disagreed with that statement. He said, in view of the fact that after His ministry on earth was concluded, that still the masses of the people in the world still did not know the Father, that the Father was cleared of any unrighteousness in the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

The fact is that *God is fair*. He is not only fair, but *He is totally righteous*. Christ did not hide Himself from the world. He did not perform His miracles so that only His disciples could see them. He did not preach and teach to only His elect. The world saw Him. They saw what He did. They heard what He taught. But still they did not pursue Him to learn more of Him, and to see that He was the final and perfect revelation of the Father. People saw the evidence, and turned away. They heard His teaching, and wanted to kill Him. People did not take advantage of the opportunity given to them. It was not God Who was unrighteous; it was the world that was unrighteous. "He came unto His own," even those who had available the ministry of the prophets, but "His own received Him not." So don't pay any attention to people that say that God is not fair. What charge will Judas be able to bring against God, or against God's Son, when he stands before the Lord in judgment?

Notice the second thing that the Lord said about the righteousness of God.

B. "But I have known Thee" (John 17:26m).

Oh, how righteous God was in sending His Son, and how gracious, too! No one was qualified to reveal the Father to the hearts of men like the Lord Jesus was. What if the Lord Jesus had never come? All that had been revealed of God in the past would, at best, been partial, as wonderful as it was. But the Son of God knew the Father in an intimacy that goes beyond anything that we can understand. Of all of the prophets in the OT and apostles in the NT, only our Lord Jesus Christ could say, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). He was the Prophet and the Apostle above all others. People who lived in OT times had the Scriptures, but the masses chose to disregard them and what they had to say about the coming Messiah. And the same has been true of all of the Scriptures since it was completed. When men like the Gentile centurion Cornelius earnestly wanted to know how to be saved, God sent the Apostle Peter to preach the Gospel to him and to his friends. But again, for the most part, people have heard of Christ, and even have recognized that He was One of the most outstanding of men who ever lived, but have not sought Him, nor His people, that they might learn of Christ, Who knew

the Father in a personal and intimate way, and Who could tell them of Him.

Again, you see the righteousness of God.

But there was a third statement that the Lord made.

C. "And these have known that Thou didst send Me" (John 17:25b).

And here, too, we see the righteousness of God. Peter and James and John and the rest of the twelve were under no doubt as to Who the Lord Jesus was, and that the Father had sent Him, for what reason? To be the Savior of the world. But it was not that they were wiser than the rest of the people in the world, nor that they deserved to know that the Father had sent His Son into the world. They, too, were just as ignorant as anyone else, but God in His righteousness chose to reveal to them by His Spirit, and through His Word, that Jesus Christ was the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of the living God. Isn't this what our Lord told Peter after Peter made that marvelous confession of Christ? "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." Peter did not discover this for himself, nor did anyone else reveal it to him. God may have used other people to teach him, but the work was a work of God. And God was absolutely righteous in what He had done in choosing His own people, and then revealing to them the truth concerning the Son of God.

Therefore, as the Lord came to the end of His ministry He had no criticism of what the Father had done, and He completely cleared the Father of any charge that He was not fair, or that He was not perfectly righteous in every detail of our Lord's ministry.

Perhaps if more people understood our Lord's words in John 17:25 (and I am speaking of the Lord's people, or those who profess to be His people), they wouldn't be so quick to reject the doctrine of election, or to accuse God of being unrighteous. No truly honest person can deny that the apostles taught the doctrine of election because it is in our Bible, not just in one place (although that would be enough), but many places.

But let us go on to the last verse.

I. THE LORD'S PAST AND CONTINUING MINISTRY (John

17:26).

A. Concerning our Lord's ministry on earth (John 17:26a).

— If you want one statement that summarizes the ministry of our Lord on earth, it is this: "And I have declared unto them Thy Name."

Names were very important in Scripture. We have been learning that in the name that the Lord gave to Simon, making him Simon Peter. It was very important even in the Name that was given to our Lord: "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

Now in declaring the Name of God to His disciples, the Lord showed to the disciples that His Father was the only One Who could rightly be called God. And both in what the Lord Himself was, as well as in what He did and taught, He Himself was a revelation to the disciples of the glorious and unique, the holy and righteous character of the Father. Nothing that the Lord ever taught His disciples about God was even in the slightest way wrong. And this, along with His redemptive work, were the two main reasons for the ministry of our Lord.

— But notice the second part of this verse.

B. Concerning our Lord's future ministry to His disciples (John 17:26m).

Here I am thinking about our Lord's words, "And will declare it." Declare what? Declare the Father's Name.

On this point let me remind you of one thing that the Lord told His disciples while they were on their way to Gethsemane. You will find it in John 16:12 -15. Listen to what the Lord said on that occasion.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

— 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

The Lord's ministry to His disciples did not end with His crucifixion. Nor did it end when He ascended back to heaven. But it continued as long as any of them lived. In the book of the Revelation we see the Apostle John in his old age, and the Lord was still teaching him even then.

Now when the Lord made that statement He obviously had in mind the completion of the NT, a work in which several of them were to have a part. But He also meant that many of the things that had already been revealed about God, even in the OT, plus what He had taught them about His Father while He was on earth, would become clearer and dearer to them in the days to come.

The same thing applies to us today. Regardless of how much we have learned about God, there is always more to learn, and greater ways in which we can profit spiritually by what we already know. This is not just an academic kind of learning, but a life-transforming kind of learning. We don't go outside of Scripture because we can never exhaust what God has already given us in His Word. But from the Word itself, as long as we live, we need to be growing and growing in our understanding of the Father, and of Christ, Who is one with the Father.

But what is the goal of all of this knowledge?

III. UNION WITH GOD AND WITH CHRIST (John 17:26b).

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world stands as the supreme evidence of God's love for us who are His people. But even more than that, it was the expression of the love that the Father has for His Son. Now, as we learn of God, we experience more and more of His love, but as His love was expressed toward us in Christ, we cannot have this divine love without having the Lord Jesus Christ Himself dwelling in us. This is the highest peak of Biblical truth as it relates to those of us who are the people of God.

The Apostle Paul would, at a later date than this, write that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5b). But we can't have love without having God. Love is not some kind of an independent quality that we can have without someone to manifest that love. When we give our love to our wives, and to our children, and even to each other as believers, it is not like giving each other a ring, or some other gift. When we give our love to our wives, we are giving ourselves. Christ is the personal expression of God's love to us.

"God is love," you know. So to have God's love and to express that love, is to have Christ living and abiding in us.

— **Concl:** This is how the Lord concluded His prayer! Can you think of any truth that could possibly be greater than this? Christ is in us because we can't have God's love without having Christ. And this is what transforms us from what we were in the world, to what God Himself has ordained us to be by His marvelous grace.

I have said, and you have said, and many others have said, that the ultimate purpose God has in our redemption is to make us like Christ. Christ came as the expression of God's love. If we are to be like Christ, one of the outstanding ways is the manner in which we manifest the love of God. But we can't manifest such love without the One Who came to reveal God's love. And that One is Christ!

— So it all ties together in this prayer, doesn't it? We couldn't save ourselves, and so there was no reason to try. Neither can we make ourselves like Christ, and so it is fruitless to try. But as the Holy Spirit teaches us the Word, and draws us into a greater understanding of God, this is the truth that God uses to manifest His love through us by the power of the One Who dwells within us, our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is by believing what our Lord said here, not by trying to explain it beyond what is said here, that the miracle of God's grace is experienced, and the purpose of God will ultimately be fulfilled in making us like Christ through Christ.

Perhaps I should close this study by using the words of God to Moses so long ago, as he stood by the burning bush. God said, "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5).

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