

JESUS PRAYING FOR HIMSELF

John 17:2-5

February 5, 2012

INTRODUCTION: In **John 17** this prayer is divided into three main sections: Jesus prays for Himself (**1-5**), then for His disciples (**6-19**), and finally for future believers, all those who will believe on Him through the disciples' witness (**20-26**).

“This part of the prayer is often said to be Jesus’ prayer for himself. As he prays that he may be glorified (vv.1,5) there is perhaps something in this. But this is not prayer ‘for’ himself in the way we usually understand this. Since his glorification is to be seen in the cross it is a prayer rather that the Father’s will may be done in him. If we do talk about this as Jesus’ prayer for himself we should at least be clear that there is no self-seeking in it.”

Leon Morris

Jesus’ prayer was *all* about His supreme passion for the glory of God. The cross *displayed* God’s glory like no other event in history, revealing His righteousness, justice, and holiness in requiring the precious blood of His Son, a lamb unblemished and spotless as a propitiation for His holy wrath against sin. The cross demonstrated His grace, mercy, and love in the sending of His only Son to die for the sins of the utterly undeserving. What God has accomplished in Jesus Christ displays both the justice and love of God because God’s holiness is vindicated in the cross, while at the same time His love is displayed in the willing and glad sacrifice of His Son.

The cross further *displayed* God’s power as He defeated sin, death, and Satan.

The cross also made clear the wisdom of God’s eternal plan of redemption.

Listen as the text speaks:

I. THE SOVEREIGN POWER OF HIS FATHER. 2-3

A. HIS POWER. 2

God our Father has given Jesus (God the Son) authority to grant life eternal.

John 1:12, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name”

It is on the basis of the **“finished work”** that we as believers have the gift of eternal life. The word *“give”* is used in one form or another at least 17 times in this prayer.

Seven times Jesus states that believers are the Father’s gift to His Son. (**2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24**)

We are accustomed to thinking of Jesus as the Father’s love gift to us (**John 3:16**), but the Lord affirms that believers are the Father’s **“love gift”** to His Son.

Proverbs 19:14

**“Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers,
But a prudent wife is from the Lord.”**

The Father gave His Son the authority to give eternal life to those whom the Father gave to the Son.

From the human viewpoint, we receive the gift of eternal life when we believe on Jesus Christ. But from the divine viewpoint, we have already been given to the Son in divine election. This is the mystery that the human mind cannot fully understand or explain; we must accept it by faith.

The passage magnifies God's sovereignty in redemption.

John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

Divine Sovereignty/Human Responsibility

John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Speaks of the drawing, convicting work of God the Holy Spirit.

John 6:39, "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."

Those whom He calls, He keeps; they are secure.

The fact that Jesus Christ alone was given the authority to grant eternal life, through His death on the cross, also underscores the exclusivity of the gospel message. It is only through Him that eternal life can be received.

John 3:35-36, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 5:24, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

B. HIS PERSONABLENESS. 3

Eternal life comes only to those who **"know"** God; implies not mere intellectual knowledge, but a deep, intimate love relationship (25).

It is not enough to only believe in God.

James 2:19, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble!"

Eternal life is not something you can earn by character or conduct; it is a gift we receive by admitting we are sinners, repenting, and believing on Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

Acts 4:12, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

1 Timothy 2:3-6, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”

To *know* is in the present tense because eternal life is not only a *future possession*, but also a *present reality*. We enjoy eternal life now as we experience the rich blessings that come through our personal and intimate fellowship with Christ.

Our knowledge of Christ should not be static, but growing.

1 John 3:1, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”

“The only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”

It’s the purpose of John’s writing

John 20:31, “but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

II. THE SUPREME PASSION OF THE SON. 4-5

To glorify His Father; eight times He speaks of **glory**. Jesus desired to live His life to the **glory of God**.

“The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of His manifold perfection.”
John Piper

Speaks of His fame, honor, and renown. We can’t add anything to His glory, but we should be acknowledging it and treasuring it; God is glorious. May we value His glory as our highest treasure.

A. SUPREME PASSION. 4a

“I have glorified You on earth” – the Father knew who would believe, therefore He sent His Son to redeem (purchase) them.

Luke 19:10, “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

In God’s perfect plan, and in keeping with His perfect justice, the Son had to come to earth in order to save those whom the Father had given Him.

GREAT TRUTH

The Father's gift was so precious to the Son that He was willing to do whatever was necessary to receive it.

Philippians 2:5-8, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

Jesus' life and ministry magnified the Father's reputation in the sight of others.

B. SUPREME PURPOSE. 4b

"having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" John 19:30 "It is finished"; proclaims the completion of His redemptive work. Jesus conquered death and provided eternal life to all who believe in Him.

Here the meaning of **II Cor 5:21** comes alive.

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Though Jesus was sinless, God treated Him as if He had committed the sins of everyone who would believe in Him, so that believers, though unrighteous, could be treated as if they had lived Christ's perfect life; **IMPUTATION**

Christ's willingness to be a sin-bearing sacrifice on the cross was the ultimate demonstration of His complete commitment to *obey* the Father, as well as the ultimate expression of His *love* for sinners.

GOOD PRINCIPLE: God is glorified through the accomplishments of His obedient servants.

Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

THE GLORY OF GOD: OUR SUPREME PASSION

This is the first and most important of the basic principles of our work. Real Christianity is God-centered. Real Christianity recognizes, as Jesus Himself said, that the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind. Those who have glimpsed the greatness, the grandeur, the majesty and the excellence of our God through the eyes of trust in Jesus never get over that vision. An obsession with the glory of God is the hallmark of true knowledge of God.

What is the glory of God? The original meaning of glory has to do with weightiness. The glory of God summarizes the seriousness, the perfection, and the infinite significance of all of the attributes of God. It sums up who He is, in the awesome brightness and weightiness of all His perfections. What does it mean then for us to glorify God? We cannot add to His glory, for He is already perfectly and infinitely glorious. Rather, for us to glorify God means for us to ascribe the glory that is due His Name in worship. It means that we acknowledge His glory by living as though His perfections are as serious and significant as they really are, so that we reflect His glory through a pure mirror. It means that nothing horrifies us more than the thought of bringing dishonor to His glorious Name, and nothing delights us more than to feel His pleasure as we live to the praise of His glory. It also means that we declare His glory among the nations, inviting others to join us in our love affair with His glorious perfection. Glorifying God thus consumes and defines every aspect of our life and witness as well as our worship.

We urgently need to recapture the centrality of glorifying God in our lives and work. Too much of what passes for evangelical Christianity in America is man-centered or even self-centered. God is reduced to a means to some other end, whether it be my own self-fulfillment or the welfare of others. The results are disastrous for worship, for discipleship, and for witness. Worship either becomes tepid, or it becomes an experience we offer to people as a sort of consumer product rather than adoration and consecration we offer to God. Discipleship becomes a self-help program that leaves huge areas of life untouched, rather than a life-long love affair with God that lays every area of life on the altar to be consecrated to Him and to be conformed to His image. Witness becomes an invitation to sample a product rather than a royal summons to flee to a sovereign Savior. In effect, we reduce the Good News to mere good advice.

If the glory of God is our supreme passion, this will redefine both the goal of our task and the manner in which we pursue that task. The goal of our task is that the earth be filled with the knowledge of His glory as the waters cover the sea. Our passion is to see Him receive the glory that is due His Name from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. Everything else is simply a means to that end. We are not seeking to add numbers that we can report to the organization; we are seeking to add worshippers to the choir of heaven, who will live every area of their lives to the praise of His glory. This focus invests a new, holy seriousness to discipleship and the life of the church. We are not content unless His glory is proclaimed, reflected, upheld and adored among the people to whom He has called us. The task is not about us, and it's not even ultimately about the nations. The focus is on Him.

A passion for the glory of God will also redefine the manner in which we pursue our task. If our supreme goal is to glorify Him, we will not be able to separate our personal lives from our work lives. The way we treat our families, the way we entertain ourselves, the way we spend our money, the way we relate to others, the way we treat our bodies, the hidden attitudes of our hearts, the time we spend nourishing our own relationship with Him, cannot be compartmentalized away from our "work." It is our job to glorify Him in every area of life, not just through the tasks written on our job descriptions. Failure in the former will mean failure in the latter as well. We also cannot accept any means to the end that does not equally bring glory to God. This passion thus has a purifying effect, safeguarding us from the temptation to take shortcuts or utilize worldly means in the pursuit of our work.

As I read over the words that I have just written, I get overwhelmed with the conviction that I fall very far short of my own counsel. That brings me to my final point. We can only live for

His glory by His grace. Apart from His enabling, I can do nothing. And even what I do by His strength is still tainted by my sinfulness, so that it must be covered by the blood of His sacrifice to be acceptable to my holy Father. Bless His Name that both His power and His grace are infinitely sufficient to meet all my needs! Brothers and sisters, I plead with you to seek His grace to make the glory of God your supreme passion. It is His supreme passion, and the pursuit of anything else would constitute failure to fulfill our calling.

C. SUPREME POSITION. 5

After accomplishing everything according to God's pre-determined plan, Jesus knew that He would be exalted to the place where He had been before His incarnation, at the Father's right hand.

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

The Word is the Son, Word was with God (face to face)

Jesus knew He would return to the full glory that awaited Him.

Philippians 2:9-11, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Jesus looked beyond the humiliation and suffering in obedience, His death on the cross, to His return to Heaven.

Psalms 24:7-10

**"Lift up your heads, O you gates!
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
The Lord mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O you gates!
Lift up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
He is the King of glory."**

The completion of those marvelous realities enabled Him to rejoice in the cross.

Hebrews 12:2, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

What He endured on the cross is not the anthem of Christian praise and worship. According to **Rev. 5:9**, we will praise the Lamb for all eternity.

**Revelation 5:9, “And they sang a new song, saying:
‘You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.’”**

The glorious truth is that the cross makes eternal life possible for all who sincerely believe in Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9-10, “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Even before the cross, all who genuinely repented of sin and trusted the forgiveness and mercy of God as their only hope will know eternal life.

Were it not for the cross, there would be no salvation for sin for anyone in any age, no gospel of grace, no hope for this life, and no eternal destiny but hell.

No wonder Paul said:

Galatians 6:14, “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”