

# JOHN CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

## Jesus Prays For Himself

### John 17:1-3

John chapter 17 is often referred to as the high priestly prayer of Christ, or as the true Lord's Prayer. Let us read it together.

John 17:1-26 HCSB<sup>1</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus spoke these things, looked up to heaven, and said: Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so that the Son may glorify You,*

<sup>2</sup> *for You gave Him authority over all flesh; so He may give eternal life to all You have given Him.*

<sup>3</sup> *This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent—Jesus Christ.*

<sup>4</sup> *I have glorified You on the earth by completing the work You gave Me to do.*

<sup>5</sup> *Now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with that glory I had with You before the world existed.*

<sup>6</sup> *I have revealed Your name to the men You gave Me from the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*

<sup>7</sup> *Now they know that all things You have given to Me are from You,*

<sup>8</sup> *because the words that You gave Me, I have given them. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from You. They have believed that You sent Me.*

<sup>9</sup> *I pray for them. **I am not praying for the world but for those You have given Me,** because they are Yours.*

<sup>10</sup> *All My things are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I have been glorified in them.*

<sup>11</sup> *I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by Your name that You have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one.*

<sup>12</sup> *While I was with them, I was protecting them by Your name that You*

<sup>1</sup> Holman Christian Standard Bible.

*have given Me. I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled.*

<sup>13</sup>

*Now I am coming to You, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have My joy completed in them.*

<sup>14</sup>

*I have given them Your word. The world hated them because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world.*

<sup>15</sup>

*I am not praying that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one.*

<sup>16</sup>

*They are not of the world, as I am not of the world.*

<sup>17</sup>

*Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.*

<sup>18</sup>

*As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.*

<sup>19</sup>

*I sanctify Myself for them, so they also may be sanctified by the truth.*

<sup>20</sup>

***I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message.***

<sup>21</sup>

*May they all be **one**, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be **one** in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me.*

<sup>22</sup>

*I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be **one** as We are **one**.*

<sup>23</sup>

*I am in them and You are in Me. May they be made completely **one**, so the world may know You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

<sup>24</sup>

*Father, I desire those You have given Me to be with Me where I am. Then they will see My glory, which You have given Me because You loved Me before the world's foundation.*

<sup>25</sup>

*Righteous Father! The world has not known You. However, I have known You, and these have known that You sent Me.*

<sup>26</sup>

*I made Your name known to them and will make it known, so the love You have loved Me with may be in them and I may be in them.*

“In conversation with Professor S. F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, the Rev. George W. Hervey asked this question:

“Professor Morse, when you were making your experiments yonder in your room in the university, did you ever come to a stand, not knowing what to do next?”

“Oh, yes, more than once.”

“And at such times what did you do next?”

“I may answer you in confidence, sir,” said the professor, “but it is a matter of which the public knows nothing. I prayed for more light.”

“And the light generally came?”

“Yes, and may I tell you that when flattering honors come to me from America and Europe on account of the invention which bears my name, I never felt I deserved them. I had made a valuable

application of electricity, not because I was superior to other men, but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone, and was pleased to reveal it to me.”

In view of these facts, it is not surprising that the inventor’s first message was, ‘What hath God wrought!’”

—*Moody Monthly* <sup>2</sup>

“There is an old Jewish legend which says that, after God had created the world, He called the angels to Him and asked them what they thought of it; and one of them said, “One thing is lacking: the sound of praise to the Creator.” So God created music, and it was heard in the whisper of the wind, and in the song of the birds; and to man also was given the gift of song. And all down the ages this gift of song has indeed proved a blessing to multitudes of souls.”<sup>3</sup>

There are two things we must learn early as followers of Christ. First, we need to learn to whom we are to give all the glory, as Professor Morse did in our illustration. Secondly, we also must come to feel in our hearts that nothing can stop us from giving glory to God. True faith glorifies the Father through the Son and the Holy Spirit thereby giving all the glory to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Let us now go back to the first three verses of John chapter seventeen and plunge ourselves into the wonder of God’s Word.

John 17:1-3 HCSB:

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus spoke **these things**, looked up to heaven, and said: Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son so that the Son may glorify You,*

<sup>2</sup> *for You gave Him authority over all flesh; so He may give eternal life to all You have given Him.*

<sup>3</sup> *This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent—Jesus Christ.*

Does it strike you as strange that God Himself in the form of the Son needed to pray? We must remember that Christ took on human form with its finite limitations when He came to earth. So if Christ, the God-Man, found it necessary to pray, how much more you and I need to be constantly in prayer. Note here that Christ is first praying for Himself. Before you and I begin to pray for others, we need to pray for ourselves. That is not a selfish me-first attitude, but rather an absolute necessity in developing, maintaining, and expanding our relationship with God. We see here the beginning of Jesus’ personal prayer to His Father.

Verse one sets the time of the prayer as being after Jesus had spoken “*these things.*” The words referred to here are those things which Jesus spoke to His disciples in chapters 13

<sup>2</sup> Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers.* Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

through 16. He had taught His disciples how to love one another. Jesus had predicted Peter's denial of Him after Jesus' arrest. Jesus had taught them that He was the only way to the Father and salvation. He taught them about the Holy Spirit, about being connected to Him like a vine is to a branch. Jesus warned them that they would be hated by the world, and then He taught them how to pray in His name. These are just a few of the many things Jesus taught them.

But then Jesus stops directing His words to the disciples and begins speaking to His Father, but we can see that His purpose in speaking to the Father is for the benefit of the disciples as well as for you and me. This is often referred to as "*the Lord's Prayer*," that is the prayer that the Lord Jesus prays to the Father. The prayer in the Sermon on the Mount is not really the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). It is the prayer that Jesus taught to His disciples. When Jesus tells them to begin with "*Our Father*," in the "*Disciples' Prayer*" it is a reference that all believers may use. However, when Jesus calls God "*Father*," it is in a different sense, although He allows believers to use the same reference for Father as He uses. This reference is to the Father of Jesus Christ with whom all believers have a similar status as Jesus because they are one with Him. True believers are Jesus' brothers and sisters, and thus share a common Father as sons and daughters of Almighty God. All of them are in the same family with the same Father. Do you know what that makes you if you are a Christ follower? It makes you royalty because you are a son or daughter of the King of the universe.

Jesus' prayer begins, "*Father, the hour has come.*" What hour? **The hour** that had been set long before the world was even created. As Jesus speaks these words, the clock is about to strike the hour that was predetermined before the foundation of the world. Do you remember what Jesus said to His mother as He began His ministry at the wedding at Cana?

John 2:3-4 HCSB:

<sup>3</sup> *When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother told Him, "They don't have any wine."*

<sup>4</sup> *"What has this concern of yours to do with Me, woman?" Jesus asked. "My hour has not yet come."*

You see there was a carefully calculated window in time that God had prepared for Jesus to be glorified and that time was now very close. Now the hour had come, the hour when Jesus would pay for your sins and mine. It is the hour when the entire world will see the love of God proven by what He is willing to do for all humanity. He will take all our sins upon Himself in the bodily form of Jesus and that sin will cause His death. His death will thereby be payment for all the sins of anyone who believes in that sacrifice He made for us. If someone refuses to accept Christ's substitutionary death for their sin, they will have to suffer both physical and spiritual death and pay the penalty for their own sin. You see sin required a perfect sacrifice, a sacrifice by someone who was sinless. The only person in all of history who was sinless was Jesus, who was God personified. People cannot save themselves, because all people from the time of Adam have committed sin. Jesus, therefore, was and is the only hope for humanity. If you do not want to believe in what

He did for you, well then you are on your own and there is no way you can obtain salvation on your own. By the way, there is also no priest, pastor, pope, rabbi, imam, or any other guru who can provide salvation. Without Jesus as your Savior your eternity will be spent in Hell.

But Jesus knew that He would need the help of the Father to go through crucifixion, death, and resurrection. So He asked the Father for help. That is what Jesus means at the end of verse 1 when He prays, “*Glorify Your Son so that the Son may glorify You.*” “Glorify” here means not merely strength to endure the Cross, but also the ability to glorify the Father by enduring the cross, and by His death, resurrection, and ascension.<sup>4</sup>

Now this is very important to understand. To “glorify” someone means to do something that brings honor and praise to that person. So Jesus is first asking the Father to reveal Jesus to the disciples as One deserving praise and glory. Jesus would accomplish this by rising from the dead thereby showing the people that He is one with God. In that way Jesus will glorify God by showing Him to be continually worthy of praise, honor, and worship. In other words, it might sound something like this in today’s sound bite world:

“Father God, let everyone see that You are in Me and that we are One in the same person. Release Your power in Me so that I might endure with dignity My death on the cross and then rise again as Your scriptures have predicted. In this way everyone will know that You are the One who sent Me and that You have the power to overcome death and sin. When they know these things they will think back to the things I have taught them, and many will believe.”

Although the disciples did not understand why Jesus would have to die when He first told them about His coming suffering, **His death was the key that would open the door to eternal life** in Heaven that had been locked since Adam and Eve first sinned by disobeying God. God's eternal plan could only be set in motion by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Even though Jesus had told them clearly that He was going up to Jerusalem where He would meet His death, they did not understand exactly what He meant. Let us go over to Luke 22 for a reminder of what Jesus had told them.

Luke 22:20-22 NLT:

<sup>20</sup> After supper he took another cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.”

<sup>21</sup> “But here at this table, sitting among us as a friend, is the man who will betray me.”

<sup>22</sup> For it has been determined that the Son of Man must die. But what sorrow awaits the one who betrays him.”

<sup>4</sup> Archibald Thomas Robertson, A.M., D.D., LL.D., Litt. D., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1930), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, under: "John 17."

Then in Mark 9:32 NLT we read:

<sup>32</sup>  
*They didn't understand what he was saying, however, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.*

Not only did they not understand what Jesus was talking about, they objected to what they did not know. If that statement sounds ridiculous to you, you are right. It is ridiculous. How can you object to something you do not understand? Just look back to what Peter said in Matthew.

Matthew 16:21-22 NLT:

<sup>21</sup>  
*From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.*

<sup>22</sup>  
*But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!"*

The disciples simply did not know why Jesus' death was necessary until He came back from the grave, after His life had been restored in a new kind of body which was designed to last for eternity. Jesus, of course, is not confined to a physical body, but He took the form of this resurrected body to show us what we will be like after our physical bodies die and when all believers are changed to possess these new incredible indestructible bodies which we will take into eternity. When we die now we cannot be certain exactly what form we will take but we do know we will be with Christ in some form because Christ told one of the criminals who was crucified with Him that, "*Today you will be with me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43). So this criminal was saved because of his faith and therefore Jesus could promise him that before the day was out he would be in Heaven. So do not despair about lying in the ground for hundreds of years before the general resurrection. All believers will go to Heaven the moment they die. It will be very much like blinking. One moment you are here on earth, you blink, and the next thing you know you are in Heaven.

After His resurrection, the disciples finally realized Jesus' purpose for coming. He not only came to teach the Gospel to them but more importantly, He came to be the perfect sacrifice for sin by dying on the cross in our place. He was willing to pinch hit for us when He knew that we would strike out and be cast into utter darkness. He knew He could hit that home run in our place and He did it so that we could receive all the glory that goes with salvation and eternal life. If it were not for Jesus' death on the cross for our sins, we would all go to Hell. No one and we mean no one can be good enough to save themselves. Jesus provided for us to have our relationship with God restored.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 NLT:

<sup>18</sup>  
*And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to*

him.

<sup>19</sup> **For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.**

<sup>20</sup> **So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!"**

<sup>21</sup> *For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*

Acts 2:22-24 NLT:

<sup>22</sup> *"People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know.*

<sup>23</sup> *But God knew what would happen, and **his prearranged plan was carried out** when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him.*

<sup>24</sup> *But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for **death could not keep him in its grip.***

On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood before a large crowd and announced that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead according to the prearranged plan of God. Then we hear the same theme repeated in:

Acts 4:27-30 NLT:

<sup>27</sup> *"In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed.*

<sup>28</sup> *But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will.*

<sup>29</sup> *And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word.*

<sup>30</sup> *Stretch out your hand with healing power; **may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.**"*

This prearranged plan for Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of mankind had been determined by God from the very beginning, and the Old Testament prophets repeated it to the people in almost every generation.

Acts 3:17-18 NLT:

<sup>17</sup> *"Friends, I realize that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was done in ignorance.*

<sup>18</sup> *But **God was fulfilling what all the prophets had foretold about the Messiah—that he must suffer these things.***

Listen now to what God said to Satan after he had tempted Adam and Eve to sin.

Genesis 3:14-15 MSG:

<sup>14</sup> *God told the serpent: "Because you've done this, you're cursed, cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals, Cursed to slink on your belly and eat dirt all your life.*

<sup>15</sup> *I'm declaring war between you and the Woman, between your offspring and hers. He'll wound your head, you'll wound his heel."*

And here is Isaiah's description of Christ and His ministry, several hundred years before He actually came to earth.

Isaiah 53:1-12 MSG:

<sup>1</sup> *Who believes what we've heard and seen? Who would have thought God's saving power would look like this?*

<sup>2</sup> *The servant grew up before God—a scrawny seedling, a scrubby plant in a parched field. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing to cause us to take a second look.*

<sup>3</sup> *He was looked down on and passed over, a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand. One look at him and people turned away. We looked down on him, thought he was scum.*

<sup>4</sup> *But the fact is, it was our pains he carried—our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures.*

<sup>5</sup> *But it was our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. Through his bruises we get healed.*

<sup>6</sup> *We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten lost. We've all done our own thing, gone our own way. And God has piled all our sins, everything we've done wrong, on him, on him.*

<sup>7</sup> *He was beaten, he was tortured, but he didn't say a word. Like a lamb taken to be slaughtered and like a sheep being sheared, he took it all in silence.*

<sup>8</sup> *Justice miscarried, and he was led off— and did anyone really know what was happening? He died without a thought for his own welfare, beaten bloody for the sins of my people.*

<sup>9</sup> *They buried him with the wicked, threw him in a rich man's grave, Even though he'd never hurt a soul or said one word that wasn't true.*

<sup>10</sup> *Still, it's what God had in mind all along, to crush him with pain. The plan was that he give himself as an offering for sin so that he'd see life come from it—life, life, and more life. And God's plan will deeply prosper through him.*

<sup>11</sup> *Out of that terrible travail of soul, he'll see that it's worth it and be glad he did it. Through what he experienced, my righteous one, my servant, will make many "righteous ones," as he himself carries the burden of their sins.*

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore I'll reward him extravagantly—the best of everything, the highest honors— Because he looked death in the face and didn't flinch, because he embraced the company of the lowest. He took on his own shoulders the sin of the many, he took up the cause of all the black sheep.*

After Christ's resurrection, Peter called on people for a response.

1 Peter 1:17-21 MSG:

<sup>17</sup> *You call out to God for help and he helps—he's a good Father that way. But don't forget, he's also a responsible Father, and won't let you get by with sloppy living. Your life is a journey you must travel with a deep consciousness of God.*

<sup>18</sup> *It cost God plenty to get you out of that dead-end, empty-headed life you grew up in.*

<sup>19</sup> *He paid with Christ's sacred blood, you know. He died like an unblemished, sacrificial lamb.*

<sup>20</sup> *And this was no afterthought. Even though it has only lately—at the end of the ages—become public knowledge, **God always knew he was going to do this for you.***

<sup>21</sup> *It's because of this sacrificed Messiah, whom God then raised from the dead and glorified, that you trust God, that you know you have a future in God.*

In verse 2 of John 17, Jesus says that the Father has given Him authority over all flesh. Then if we turn over to Matthew's Gospel we see this.

Matthew 28:18-20 NLT:

<sup>18</sup> *Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.*

<sup>19</sup> *Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

<sup>20</sup> *Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

In other words, Jesus could make everyone do as He commanded if He wanted to do so. But what would salvation mean to a person who was forced into it? A person would be little less than a robot that is programmed to do something that someone else wants them to do, rather than what they choose to do out of love and trust and a willingness to serve.

The last part of John 17 verse 2 suggests to many scholars that God has determined which people will be saved and which will not be saved. I do not intend to take this time to point out why I believe those folks are wrong. I have already done that previously. I believe God desires for everyone to be saved (2 Peter 3:9) and consequently has provided many with the opportunity to hear the truth and accept it.

Romans 10:8-21 NLT:

<sup>8</sup> *In fact, it says, “The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your heart.” And that message is the very message about faith that we preach:*

<sup>9</sup> *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

<sup>10</sup> *For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.*

<sup>11</sup> *As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.”*

<sup>12</sup> *Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him.*

<sup>13</sup> *For “**Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**”*

<sup>14</sup> *But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?*

<sup>15</sup> *And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!”*

<sup>16</sup> *But not everyone welcomes the Good News, for Isaiah the prophet said, “Lord, who has believed our message?”*

<sup>17</sup> ***So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.***

<sup>18</sup> *But I ask, have the people of Israel actually heard the message? Yes, they have: “The message has gone throughout the earth, and the words to all the world.”*

<sup>19</sup> *But I ask, did the people of Israel really understand? Yes, they did, for even in the time of Moses, God said, “I will rouse your jealousy through people who are not even a nation. I will provoke your anger through the foolish Gentiles.”*

<sup>20</sup> *And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying, “I was found by people who were not looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not asking for me.”*

<sup>21</sup> *But regarding Israel, God said, “All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious.”*

Do not worry about God not giving everyone an opportunity to hear the Gospel message. Verse 18 says that the message went out to the entire world and that is good enough for me. As a matter of fact, if you have not accepted Jesus as your personal Savior, do not worry about how fair God is to allow others to hear the Gospel. You had better focus on yourself because you are hearing the Gospel right now, and if you reject it you will suffer the consequences. So that is where your focus should be right now. God gives eternal life to all who hear the call and respond by believing the message in their hearts. They come to Christ of their own free will.

In John 17:3 the message is simply that eternal life is given to a person who truly knows God and Jesus Christ. Eternal life has been promised to those who believe in and follow the commands of God Almighty. **Do you know Jesus Christ?** Let us look at a quote from Charles Spurgeon, a truly gifted and devoted man of God: *"It is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee. It is Christ. It is not thy faith in Christ, though that be the instrument. It is Christ's blood and merit."* Now faith comes by hearing, hearing the Word of God. What does the Word of God say? The Gospel is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. Those are the facts. Our knowledge of the facts and our response to that knowledge is faith. Faith is trusting Christ as our own Savior.<sup>5</sup>

To know Christ as Savior means to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. When we grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ through the study of the Bible, we come to a place of peace and confidence. Anyone not experiencing that confidence from their salvation and being joined to Jesus is either not truly saved or has not spent much time in the Scripture since becoming a Christian. To have eternal life is to know the one and only God and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the reason that the study of the Word of God is so important. Many people who claim to be Christians never get to know their Bible and consequently they never get to know God or Jesus. Therefore, they are never confident that they have been saved. How do you feel about your salvation?

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<sup>5</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, under: "Chapter 17."