

# THE GREATEST PRAYER EVER PRAYED

BY DR. JERRY VINES

*By the Book*™ A Chapter by  
Chapter Bible Study Series  
from Jerry Vines Ministries  
2295 Towne Lake Parkway  
Suite 116 #249  
Woodstock, GA 30189

Daily Bible Reading  
Nov 13 Acts 1-3  
Nov 14 Acts 4-6  
Nov 15 Acts 7-8  
Nov 16 Acts 9-10  
Nov 17 Acts 11-13  
Nov 18 Acts 14-15  
Nov 19 Acts 16-17  
Nov 20 Acts 18-20

## Let's Begin

*Perhaps the most sacred ground upon which we stand in John's Gospel is chapter 17. Every single word drips with Heaven's Divine dew. Often times we identify the Lord's Prayer with Jesus' instructions on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6: 9-13). Technically, the instructions Jesus gave His followers there can best be described as "The Model Prayer." In our present text, however, from the very first verse, Jesus prays: "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" (v. 1). This chapter literally is The Lord's Prayer.*

*It takes little imagination to envision this scene John records as reminiscent of God's words to Moses: "...put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). Here we are about to step into the Holy of Holies with the High Priest Himself--Jesus Christ. The longest prayer on record that Jesus uttered stands as a sacred example of Divine communication between God the Father and God the Son. We ask, just what was it that stirred the heart of Jesus in prayer? We have the answer in John 17.*

*As we move through this prayer with deep reverence, let's use the following outline to assist us:*

- I. The Person of the Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed (vv. 1-5)**
- II. The Petition of the Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed (vv. 6-19)**
- III. The Product of the Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed (vv. 20-26)**

## I. The Person of the Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed (vv. 1-5)

In the first five verses, it is impossible to overlook the repeated words Jesus uses: "glory," "glorified," "glorify." As Jesus unfolds His work of redemption, we are struck by the fact that His salvation is primarily about the glory of God. Glory is all about magnifying God and His Son, Jesus Christ: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (v. 5).

As we examine the Person who prayed the greatest prayer ever uttered, let's

### Reflection Connection

*When you think of "glory," what first comes to your mind? Explain.*

note three specific ways His glory was revealed.

First, His glory was revealed in His peerless Person (vv. 2-4). No one stood on level ground with Jesus. Every aspect of His life on earth glorified God. His Father mattered most. No exceptions.

More importantly, when one looks at Jesus, one beholds the glory of God Himself. The Apostle Paul wrote, "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" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Looking at Jesus, then, means gazing at God (cp. 14: 8-9). It is proper to ask if there are any identification marks that can tell us for sure that when we look at the Person of Christ, we are looking at God. In the verse under consideration, we immediately discern two such marks. The first mark that identifies Jesus with God and thus proves He has no peers is His *sinless person*. Note Jesus' solemn words: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (v. 4).

Jesus spoke with such certainty here—even before He had been crucified. With unparalleled boldness He declared, "I have finished the work which thou



### Reflection Connection

*When Jesus spoke "I have finished the work," He was acknowledging that His life's work counted. How could you know if your life counts for something? Please explain. Do you feel your life could count more? Why or why not?*

gavest me to do." The eternal plan of salvation was *perfected* in time and space. Earlier, John had recorded that "the Word [God's Eternal Son] became flesh and dwelt among us." The dwelling was beheld as "his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (1:14).

The Apostle wrote to the Hebrews similarly: "[His Son] Who being the *brightness of his glory*, and the *express image of his person*, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3, italics added). It is impossible to miss this. Jesus Christ is the perfect reflection of God, including God's nature and God's character. He was God's perfect man, the "Last Adam" the Apostle Paul calls Him (1 Corinthians 15:45). However, what the first Adam failed, the "Last Adam" perfected: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ [that is, the "Last Adam"] shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15: 22). Even among non-Christians, Jesus was known for His moral excellencies which could not be subdued.

A second mark, which indelibly branded Jesus as having no peers, was His *supernatural power*. When Jesus performed His first miraculous sign by turning the water into freshly made wine, John carefully reminds us the supernatural miracle "manifested forth his glory" (2: 11). In addition, upon hearing news of Lazarus' death, Jesus immediately responded that God's glory awaited. He said: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (11: 4; cp. v. 40).

What we find, therefore, is the perfect, peerless Son of God Who, through His sinless person and supernatural power, reveals God's magnificent glory. Think about that for a moment. This is The One who spoke the greatest prayer ever prayed. Consider also this: *If the greatest Person ever to walk this earth felt compelled to lift His heart in prayer to God, where does that leave sinful people like us?* In other words, who among us, after hearing the heartbeat of Jesus in prayer would dare minimize prayer's practice in our own personal life?

*Second, His glory was revealed in His perfect passion* (v. 1; cp. v. 46). Jesus' first prayerful utterance was, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee" (v. 1). What glory was Jesus referring to? The glory was none other than His cross (cp. 12:23, 28; 13:31). Recall the centurion's confession: "Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). Paul's maxim was "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14; cp. Hebrews 2:9). Jesus, in His heart of hearts, was praying to die! He was pleading with the Father to put Him to death so He could put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:26). Thus, Jesus was *asking* for death.

*Jesus was God's perfect man.*

Additionally, Jesus *anticipated* death. He says "the hour has come." Tracing the phrase in John's Gospel pertaining to Jesus' "hour" is instructive (2:4; 7:30; 6:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32). The pattern is clear that Jesus fully anticipated His own impending death. In this prayer, He indicates His hour had now come and that He was ready.



### Reflection Connection

*How does it make you feel to know that Jesus Christ is actually praying for you? Do you find comfort in such knowledge? Are you inspired to pray yourself? Explain.*

Jesus' death was further an *accomplished death*. Note again the words of our Lord: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (v. 4). No one but Jesus Christ can say this. When we think of our own life, how it has unfolded through the years, most of us can say we have finished many things God wanted us to accomplish. Dare any of us say we have finished all that God wanted us to accomplish? Hardly.

Jesus' death was an *atoning death*. "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (v. 4). God gives Jesus Christ authority over all flesh. The keys of Heaven are in His hands. The salvation of every soul is at His disposal (cp. Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 11:3).

*Third, His glory is revealed in His present position* (v. 5). No other passage is so clear about the eternality of the Son of God than Jesus' prayer to the Father: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (v. 5). Jesus is the eternal "I AM" (cp. 8:58). He *existed* as God with glory before the foundation of the world.

Moreover, He *emptied* Himself of His glory (cp. Philippians 2: 8). How? A perfect visual is Jesus laying aside His garments as He washed the disciples feet (13: 1-10). From Heaven, Jesus laid aside His eternal glory long enough to make sacrifice for the sins of wicked, hopeless sinners. When the work of the cross was complete, He would return to the Father (v. 5).

## II. The Petition of the Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed (vv. 6-19)

Now that we've considered the greatest Person Who's ever prayed, let's focus on the content of the petition our Lord offered in prayer.

First, Jesus petitioned the Father concerning our *difficulty*: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word" (v. 6). What appears on Jesus' mind concerning His followers is first and foremost their well being in the *world*. Jesus knew the moment every believer embarks on his journey to live the Christian life, difficulties would be aiming for him. Fifty-nine times the term "world" is used in John's Gospel, fourteen times of which are in the prayer of Jesus. Jesus uses it to refer to human society organized without regard to God. Thus, Jesus is telling us as Christians what our relationship to the world should be. He mentions several things:

- *We are saved out of the world* (v. 6): This means we have a change of address. Similarly, Paul indicated "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20)

*Jesus prayed  
for our  
insulation not  
our isolation!*



- *We are still in the world* (v. 11): Salvation doesn't physically remove us from this life. Jesus intended us to remain. Jesus prayed for our insulation not our isolation!
- *We are not to be of the world* (v. 16): We are not to be friends with this world (cp. James 4:4). We are not to be spotted by it (James 1:27), conformed to it (Romans 12: 2), and are certainly not to love it (1 John 2:15). One needs only to remember Lot (cp. Luke 17:29)
- *We are sent into the world* (v. 18): Jesus did not pray for the world (v. 9). What Jesus does for the world is send His Son and saints into the world. The Christian is both salt and light (cp. Matthew 5: 13-14).

### Reflection Connection

*Make a list of those things for which you normally pray. Be prepared to share such a list with your group. Allow time for others to share what might be on their list.*

Next, Jesus petitioned the Father concerning our *deliverance*: “they have kept thy word” (v. 6); “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me...” (v. 8); “I have given them thy word” (v. 14); “thy word is truth” (v. 17); “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word” (v. 20). *What is impossible to miss in the prayer of Jesus is, our deliverance is directly linked to the Word of God.* There are good reasons for this.

First, the Word of God is a *tender gift* (v. 14). Jesus has “given” us the word. Here lies a question which needs considerable attention: Do you appreciate the Scripture? Have you thanked God for the Bible? Do you demonstrate such gratitude by not only exploring its content but executing its content?

Second, the Word of God is a *truthful gift* (v. 17b). Note that Jesus in no way suggested the Scripture contained the truth. Indeed this was the single, greatest flaw in the Liberalism of the early 20th century—the denial that the Bible was fully true. Once this foundational principle is forfeited, every major doctrine of the Bible becomes disposable. That is precisely what happened in so many Christian denominations that forsook the Bible’s infallibility. If the Author of Scripture is true, then the Scripture must be true. And, note that the Bible isn’t merely true. It is “truth.” God’s Word determines everything else to be true or untrue.

Third, the Word of God is a *transformational gift* (v. 17a). The Word is not offered to us as a suggestion, option, or opinion. Of course, it is full of historical facts and interesting stories. And, every area of knowledge that it addresses, it addresses truthfully. But, the Bible is not given to us just to relay information. Rather the Word’s essential purpose is to transform our life, beginning with our rebirth by means of accepting the Savior, Jesus Christ, and extending until our ultimate transformation when Jesus comes again! God wants us sanctified—transformed—by His truth; His Word is truth!

### Reflection Connection

*If you were asked the question, “What happens when you pray?,” what would be your response? Please use this time as a way for the class to reflect on answers to their prayers.*

## III. The Product of the Greatest Prayer Ever Prayed (vv. 20-26)

Over the past several years, an entire series of books hit the Christian bookstores with titles like *What Happens When Christians Pray?*, *What Happens When Women Pray?*, *What Happens When Men Pray?*, etc. What we may consider from John 17 is, what happens when Jesus prays? What produce do we expect from the harvest of His prayers? There are at least three things in this chapter,



two of which we have already essentially considered—the gift of eternal life (v. 2) which concerns our *salvation* and the gift of the Word (v. 14; *et. al*) which concerns our *sanctification*. The third is the gift of glory which connects to *glorification* and concerns our future.

When the Bible seeks to summarize all that will be given to believers in the future, the word that mostly describes such summary is glory. As we zero in on the results from Jesus' prayer, let's consider several aspects of the glory revealed in the words of Jesus.

*First, note the promise of glory* (v. 22; cp. vv. 1-5). Jesus prays: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (v. 22). What an incredible promise Jesus is praying. The very glory He has with the Father, He desires to bestow upon us! He further desires us to be as perfectly united as He and the Father.

The term "glory" has a rich foundation in the Old Testament. The "glory" cloud led Israel (Exodus 13: 21-22). It was the "glory of the Lord" which filled Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 5: 13-14). And sadly, it was the departure of the "glory" which consumed Ezekiel's prophetic vision (Ezekiel 1:28; 9:3; 10:18-19; 11:22-23).

Nonetheless, the gracious Lord promised the "glory" would return (Isaiah 22:22-24; 40:5). And return it did! When Jesus came, the glory of the Lord came with Him. Through His birth (Luke 2:9), His miracles (John 2:11), His transformation (2 Peter 1:17), His cross (Galatians 6:14), and His ascension (1 Timothy 3:16) the "glory" of the Lord is unmistakable.

*Second, we have the process of glory*: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (v. 23).

It's obvious we Christians are not all we ought to be now. Sometimes our life doesn't seem to look so glorious. The Bible teaches us there is a process involved. Consider these apostolic words: "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory" (Romans 9:23). Our life is continually being transformed. God uses His Word (v. 17), afflictions (2 Corinthians 4:17), and sufferings (Romans 8:18) among other things, as means to transform us from glory to glory.

*Third, we have the perfection of glory* (v. 24). Here Jesus thrusts us to the mountain of victory: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

We shall see the glory of the Lord. That's Jesus' prayer for us! Also, we shall show forth the glory we behold. That's the prayer of Jesus for us! Furthermore, we shall share His glory. That's the prayer of Jesus for us!

*We shall see the  
glory of the Lord.  
That's Jesus'  
prayer for us!*

### Reflection Connection

*What is one way God is transforming your life? Be specific. If you are comfortable in doing so, consider judiciously and respectfully sharing a way God **needs** to work in your life and for which you are praying He will.*



Stopping here would suit most of us just fine, but there's more. We shall have a glorified body and spend eternity in Heaven with Him. That's the prayer of Jesus for us!

### Golden Greek Nugget

During Jesus' prayer, He uses a Greek term translated as "glory" or "glorify" (v. 5). The literal word is "doxa" and is the basis of our English word "doxology." It primarily signifies an extremely high estimate of honor and reverence, even worship. Jesus was anticipating ascending to the Father once again, after His death, burial and resurrection.

### Wrap Up

Considering the prayer of Jesus may be the most sacred thing we ever attempt as we study the Word of God. John 17 enriches us by seeing the Person who prayed the greatest prayer, what the prayer contained, and the results. Every child of God gleans wonderful assurance knowing that Jesus, God's Son, prays for him.

