

John 17:1-26, pt. 1

January 24, 2010

We began this series on Biblical praying back on October 4 with the Model Prayer

- Jesus had been praying and His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray
- Jesus gave them a model or example or template of how to pray

Well, I want us to look at the Lord's Prayer this morning

- John 17 is the record of Jesus' longest prayer in Scripture

We know that Jesus was devoted to prayer

- That may sound strange that God was committed to prayer

But as we will see in John 17, Christ was longing to be reunited with His Father in heaven

- He longed to have the glory that the Father had bestowed on Him earlier

Let's take some time to look at the prayer life of Jesus Christ

- He was oftentimes by Himself when He prayed
- At other times, He was with others

Turn to Luke 3:21-22, "Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased'"

- This is obviously Jesus' baptism
- Jesus was praying after this baptism and "heaven was opened"

Turn over to Luke 9:28-29, "He took along Peter and John and James, and went up to the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became white and gleaming*"

- To be selected to go on this mountain with Jesus must have been spectacular
- Peter, John, and James were the "inner three" of the 12 apostles
- They accompanied Jesus on select ministries and events

While separated from the crowds and the other nine apostles, Jesus prayed with Peter, James, and John

- While Jesus was praying, His appearance was transfigured
- We also know that Moses and Elijah stood with Him and spoke with Him

We have already studied the passage of Luke 11

- This is the Model Prayer of which I spoke earlier
- Jesus helped the disciples how to pray to the heavenly Father

So we see that Jesus prayed with others on a number of occasions

- After His baptism (Lk 3:21)
- On the mountain (Lk 9:28-29)
- With the disciples (Lk 11:1ff)

But the Bible records Jesus praying by Himself more than praying with others

Let's turn to Matthew 14 (the same information is in Mark 6:46)

- Mt 14 records the event of Christ feeding the 5000 men
- What a sight this must have been!
- If you include the women and children, the crowds may have exceeded 15,000

After He had fed the multitudes, Jesus told the disciples to get into a boat and “go ahead of Him to the other side” (14:22)

- “And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone” (14:23)

I can picture this scene

- Christ is on the top of a mountain
- Over His shoulder, you can see the boat out in the water, battling the waves and wind (14:24)
- But Jesus was committed to praying

Let's turn to Matthew 26 (the same information is recorded in Mark 14 and Luke 22)

- This is the prayer of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane
- Christ was in the shadow of the cross by this time and He felt the weight of His responsibility
- Three times He prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Mt 26:39)
- Doctor Luke tells us, “in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground” (Lk 22:44)

What a contrast to see Christ agonizing in prayer

- Then to see the disciples sound asleep
- Christ had asked them to pray with Him; however, they failed miserably

Please turn over to Mark 1:35, “And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there”

- Jesus had been healing many of sicknesses – one of these was Simon's mother-in-law
- He had also been casting out many demons

The Text says that “the whole city had gathered at the door” (1:33)

- This was no small gathering

We are not told how many people Jesus healed or how long it took Him to do this

- But it must have taken a long time

Then we read that early the next morning, Christ arose and went to a place by Himself to pray

- He didn't sleep in
- He didn't rush back out into the public arena
- Rather, He went off by Himself to pray

Turn to Luke 5:16, “But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray”

- Jesus had been teaching in a boat that belonged to Simon (5:3)
- He then told Simon to let down his nets, even though Simon had been fishing all night long (5:4-5)
- There were so many fish in the nets that Simon needed the help of the other fishermen – both boats were full (5:6-7)

- Jesus used this incident to call Simon, James, and John to be His followers (5:8-11)
- Jesus healed a man who had leprosy – but He told the man not to tell anyone about he healing
- But the result was that “**great multitudes were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses**” (5:15)
- In the midst of so many people wanting His time and attention, Christ would often go away by Himself and pray

Turn over one chapter to Luke 6:12, “**And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God**”

- The first part of Luke 6 records two incidents related to the Sabbath
- Of course, the Pharisees were always looking for a reason to accuse Christ (6:7)
- When Christ healed a man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees were enraged
- It was out of this situation that Christ went away and prayed all night long
- The very next morning, Christ selected His 12 apostles

One last passage to look at in Luke 9:18, “**And it came about that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, ‘Who do the multitudes say that I am?’**”

- This took place much later after the feeding of the 5000
- The multitudes were unsure as to who Christ really was
- But the disciples knew that He was the Christ
- But it was out of the context of prayer that Christ asked this question of His followers

What I want us to see is that prayer was a regular part of Christ’s life

- It wasn’t an occasional, sporadic thing
- Rather, it seems that He included prayer as a regular part of His earthly life

Jesus prayed by Himself, all alone, on many occasions

- Before Jesus walked on the water
- Before Jesus prayed in the Garden
- After healing many people from sickness
- After news about Him was being spread over the country
- Before He selected the Twelve apostles
- Before He asked His disciples, “Who do the multitudes say that I am?”

We need to follow the example of Christ

- Praying with others
- Praying by ourselves

Are we committed to prayer like our Lord?

- Are we convinced that we can do nothing apart from Him?

Of all people, Christ could have been the One who prayed the least

- He was God Incarnate
- He had no weakness or need that He could not meet

But when Christ came to the Earth, He voluntarily set aside the independent use of His attributes

- In other words, He would not exercise His abilities in a way that was out of alignment with the Father's desire
- He submitted Himself to His heavenly Father

Besides this, Jesus Christ enjoyed the eternal fellowship with His Father before His Incarnation

- Christ would sometimes make a pre-incarnate appearance to someone here on Earth
- But it would be a brief visit

But when He came to this Earth, He was physically separated from God the Father for over 30 years

- Granted, that is not a long time when compared to eternity
- But it is separation nonetheless

Prayer was a Divine means of Christ keeping in contact and fellowship with God the Father

I would have loved to hear Christ pray

- It would have been something special to be one of the apostles who was privileged to hear the God-Man pray
- We have already seen how prayer was a regular part of Christ's life

We will never hear Christ pray in person

- Once we are in heaven, there will be no need for prayer
- There will be no more separation from God
- We will experience face-to-face communion with Him

But while we are here on Earth, we do experience a physical separation from our Lord

- That is why we need to pray, just as Christ prayed

The Bible does give us one chapter that is completely devoted to Christ's prayer

- That chapter is John 17

I want us to take the rest of this morning and next week to look at this prayer

- This is a rich chapter that records Christ's own prayer
- It is presented as it really was, in all its entirety

John 13-17 is a block of the Gospel that pertains to Jesus' preparation of His disciples for His departure

- Upper room discourse (13-14)
 - o Last Supper
 - o Betrayal of Judas
 - o Facts of Christ's departure
- On the way to the Garden (15-17)
 - o Instructions to His followers
 - o Christ's prayer

This prayer pulls the veil back and allows us to hear the face-to-face communion that exists between the Son and the Father¹

- We are allowed to hear God speak with God

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1412.

John 17 comes near the end of Christ's earthly ministry

- It is, in some ways, a summary of His purpose here on Earth

The prayer is also transitional in nature

- Jesus is completing His earthly ministry
- But Jesus is beginning His intercessory ministry for His followers

“He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since *He always lives to make intercession for them*” (Heb 7:25, italics mine)

- Do you realize that Jesus Christ intercedes for you “always”?

Satan is the accuser of the brethren

- Christ is the interceder for the brethren

We also know that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us

- “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*” (Rom 8:26-27)

Christ's prayer in John 17 entails many glorious themes²

- Jesus' obedience to the Father
- God the Father being glorified through Christ's death and glorification
- The revelation of God through Jesus Christ
- The choosing of the disciples out of the world
- The mission of these disciples in the world
- The unity of these disciples which is modeled after the unity of the Father and the Son
- The believer's final destiny in the very presence of the Father and the Son

The prayer breaks down into three (3) general divisions:³

- Jesus prays for Himself (17:1-5)
- Jesus prays for His present disciples (17:6-19)
- Jesus prays for His future believers (17:20-26)

We want to take a jet-tour of this prayer

- An in-depth study would take us a number of months to mine out the precious truths found within
- But I want to expose you to some of these truths

Let's read John 17

Let's look first of all at some common words that emerge from this prayer

- It helps to see what emphasis Christ put on various topics

² MacArthur, 1412.

³ Merrill C. Tenney, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 9, 25.*

The word that appears the most in this chapter is “world”

- It occurs 18 times in this chapter alone
 - o Action before the world was (5, 24)
 - o Disciples were chosen out of the world (6)
 - o Description as a system that does not know God (9, 14^{three}, 16^{twice}, 21, 23, 25)
 - o Geographical location (11^{twice}, 13, 15, 18^{twice})

So the word “world” occurs many times with various meanings in this chapter

- This highlights the need for us to do word studies in Bible study
- But we must understand that various words can have different meanings in the same context

Another word that occurs numerous times is “sent” or “send”

- It is used 7 times
 - o God sending Jesus to Earth on a mission (3, 8, 18a, 21, 23, 25)
 - o Jesus sending His disciples on a mission (18b)

The reason for God sending Jesus to the Earth was so that people might “know” God

- We know that general revelation around us is sufficient to condemn but it is unable to save
- It takes God’s special revelation in His Word to tell us of God’s saving character
- “know” or its root is used 8 times
 - o Knowledge of God is eternal life (3)
 - o His disciples know God (7, 25c)
 - o The world does not know God (23, 25a)
 - o Jesus knows God (25b)
 - o The name of God is known (26)

Christ writes as the Son to the “Father” which is used 6 times (1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25)

Unity is also a big part of this prayer

- “one” is used 4 times in this chapter alone (11, 21, 22^{twice})
 - o The basis or essence of this unity is modeled after the unity between Christ and God the Father
 - o They may differ in function, but they are one in essence

The thought of God being glorified occurs several times as well

- Jesus asks to be glorified (1a, 5, 10)
- Jesus seeks to glorify His Father (1b, 4)

Accompanying this is the thought of “glory” that pervades this prayer

- This glory was given to Him by the Father, even before the foundation of the world (5)
- This speaks of Christ’s pre-existence and His eternity

Other topics that are repeated numerous times are:

- Word(s) 5x 6, 8, 14, 17, 20
- Love 5x 23^{twice}, 24, 26^{twice}
- Name 5x 6, 11^{twice}, 12, 26
- Life 2x 2, 3
- Joy 1x 13

We will give a brief overview of John 17 next week

- Read ahead and be familiar with this prayer
- It is the very prayer of Jesus Christ