

October 11, 2015
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE
John 17:1-5

What is prayer? How should God's people pray? Why should we pray? How long should we pray? For what should we pray? We might be able to answer some of those questions from the several examples of prayers in the Old Testament. That would be especially true regarding the examples from David and the other Psalmists as they prayed to God for help and deliverance in times of trouble and as they praised God in prayer.

The disciples apparently had questions much like ours, and they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. The Lord's Prayer, as it is commonly called, recorded in Matthew 6:9-13 and in Luke 11 is not a prayer of Jesus but is His instruction to the disciples about how to pray. No doubt if we really wanted to know how to pray, we should follow the example of Jesus as He prayed to God the Father.

There are statements in the Gospel accounts that reveal that Jesus regularly spent much time in prayer. Passages in Matthew 14:23; 19:13; 26:36; Mark 1:35; 6:26; 14:32; Luke 6:12; 9:18, 28, 29; 22:41ff, all paint the picture of Jesus praying alone, sometimes all night, seeking communion with the Father and strength for the coming tasks. Occasionally, there are brief statements that record prayers of Jesus. But generally, those prayers are for the benefit of the people around Him at the time. Such was the case when He prayed at Lazarus' tomb, *And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me"* (John 11:41-42).

The text before us is a unique recording of the heart of our Savior poured out to the Heavenly Father in our behalf. It is not just

the greatest prayer in the Bible but, as some conclude, this is the greatest text in the Bible. It reveals the heart of God the Son in His relationship with God the Father. It also reveals the Savior's heart for the disciples and, in a sense, for us His modern followers.

But most important this prayer of Jesus serves as a summary of all the great truths of John's gospel, all that Jesus taught and did up to this point. Remember the central statement of John's Gospel, the purpose for which God had John write. *But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31)*. This prayer explains the great evangel. It is an explanation of the doctrine of soteriology. It simply tells us how to be saved and how God matures new believers to help other sinners become new believers.

This prayer from the heart of Christ is a synopsis of His ministry. It reveals why He came to be one of us. God the Son laid aside His glory to become one of us in order to offer the way to eternal salvation.

God is Glorified in Giving Eternal Life (vv.1-2).

Most human wisdom would agree that God (assuming He exists) is glorified in giving eternal life (assuming that is a possibility). To state the concept differently, as in verse one where we read that God is glorified in the perfect sacrifice, puts the matter in a different light. But that is precisely how God the Son prayed to God the Father. The text states that *"When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said"* (v.1a). This is not to conclude that prayer must be made while looking into heaven like Jesus did. However, when Jesus prayed at the tomb of Lazarus, He did the same thing. We know from the Scripture account that when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, He knelt down and even fell on His face as He prayed.

We are left with the idea that prayer to the Heavenly Father expects an attitude of submission that is indicated by a certain posture. To that end, we see pictures of prayer in the Bible with heads bowed, often the petitioner kneeling, bowing with heads and hands lifted toward the heavens. Is this an accurate portrayal of heaven, the abode of God our Father being "up"?

In this prayer, God the Son acknowledged the time for God the Father to give and receive glory. He prayed, “*Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you*” (v. 1b). From the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus often revealed that it was not yet the hour for His glorification. At the first miracle, the wedding in Cana, Jesus told His mother that His hour had not yet come (2:4). The same was true at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:6,30; 8:20).

But now in the context of the last Passover for Jesus, after the Triumphal Entry, the stage is set. The hour had come for the great moment of glorification. Jesus pointed out this truth after the Greeks came to visit Him (12:23,27,29,31-32). In those verses, we see that Jesus stated five times that the hour had come for Him to be glorified. Also, in the setting of washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus acknowledged the same thing (13:1). Now in this great prayer (17:1) Jesus said once again that the hour for glorification had arrived.

What an hour it was! This is the hour the creation had waited for ever since Adam’s fall into sin and God’s promised Seed of the Woman who would crush the head of Satan. God gave that promise easily 4,000 - 6,000 years earlier. Now, finally, the hour of glory had arrived. God’s plan was culminating. And yet this hour was the appointed time of horrendous suffering for which God the Son came to the earth. Satan wounding the Seed of the woman’s heel was no small matter. The hour entailed the most severe suffering for God the Son, especially in that He would experience being forsaken by His Father as He bore our sins. Notice though that God the Son was not resigned in fatalism as if to say, “Just get the suffering over!” Rather He prayed to His Father for right and proper glory.

It was the moment of glory. In the beginning of the Gospel, John introduced us to Jesus like this, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14)*. John could say from the perspective of a firsthand witness that God became one of us and the people observed, gazed upon, looked at His glory. What did the people see? They observed perfection and didn’t know how to respond. They watched perfect truth incarnate and it shamed them. They experienced the power of the Creator to calm storms, heal the sick, feed thousands, cast out demons and raise the dead. When three

disciples, Peter, James, and John saw a very small glimpse of this blazing glory, they fell down like dead men.

The glory of God, magnificently observed even slightly in the incarnate Son, is pure like a sea of crystal. In the Revelation of future events, John wrote: *At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind (Revelation 4:2-6)*. That is pure glory.

God’s glory is perfect being without flaw or need for improvement or correction in any way. How does anyone, including God, improve perfection? We are regularly bombarded with advertisements urging us to buy the latest computer or phone or gadget because there has never in the history of humanity been a better, faster, more user-friendly model. So you plunk down your \$800 to buy the latest and greatest gadget only to learn in less than a year that there is a new and improved model. No one, including God Himself, will improve His glory. It is eternally complete and perfect.

God’s glory is powerful to perform what human wisdom cannot comprehend, think, or even request. *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us (Ephesians 3:20)*. The glory of God is breathtaking and mind-boggling. Human experience cannot define it, human language cannot describe it, and human bodies cannot endure it. God’s glory is beyond comprehension and imagination. Jesus prayed to God the Father acknowledging that it was time for that glory to become obvious to the human race.

So what did God do? God did the most amazing thing. He won eternal life for us sinners. The second verse of our text teaches that rightful glory is rooted in God’s gift of eternal life (v.2). That gift

comes to us through Jesus Christ who has authority over all flesh. Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify Him *“since you have given him authority over all flesh”* (v.2a). The rightful glory of God the Son stands on the foundation of His rightful authority. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit grant to God the Son authority over all flesh. In eternity, the Godhead determined that the Son would have the prerogative of authority over the entire human race. This right came from the Son’s obedience unto death as the payment for sin. Though the act of obedience was still future by several hours, the fact of the Son’s obedience was already determined in eternity.

Because Jesus, the man from Nazareth, obeyed God’s law perfectly and willingly died to pay sin’s penalty, He rightfully has all authority over every single human being. Therefore, because of His sacrifice, Jesus holds the eternal destiny of every person in His hand. This should strike unimaginable fear into the hearts of every sinner. How dare a mere human mock Christ, curse Christ, ignore Christ, set Christ aside, or attempt to replace Christ’s sacrifice. Christ alone is the sinner’s hope to escape hell and inherit eternal life.

While Christ’s authority to grant salvation ought to cause sinners to fear, this same truth offers incomprehensible joy and peace to us who are being saved by His perfect sacrifice. Because He has complete authority over me, no one (including myself) can take me from His hand (John 10:29). Therefore, our eternal destiny is more secure than anything we can compare it to on earth.

There is reportedly about \$250 billion of gold in Fort Knox. In an effort to protect that asset, the government has built what is considered to be the most secure vault in the world. The walls of the depository are four foot thick granite. It is also likely that they are lined with cement, steel, and fireproof material. The walls can withstand a direct hit of a nuclear bomb. The foundation is formed with multiple layers of concrete with ten feet of granite on top of that. Outside the building that houses the vault are multiple barriers, defenses, and guards that make even the building impenetrable. It is highly unlikely that anyone is going to break in and steal the gold in Fort Knox. My eternal salvation is more secure than that because it is altogether impossible that anyone or anything can overcome my Savior who holds me in His hand.

Christ, who has been given all authority, gives eternal life to those whom God has chosen. He has authority *“to give eternal life to all whom you have given him”* (v.2b). Because the Triune God has granted authority to God the Son, it is His right to give eternal life. Why would anyone reject Jesus as their Savior from the penalty of sin? They are blinded by the god of this world Satan. Paul explained, *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

At the same time, the individual is responsible because he or she refuses to believe all the evidence God has presented. The invitation is universal. Jesus presented it, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life”* (John 5:24). In spite of the kind and amazing invitation, most people refuse to believe Jesus. Paul observed, *But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?”* (Romans 10:16).

Because sinners reject God the Son, God allows them to be spiritually blind to spiritual truth. Jesus Himself said, *“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them”* (John 12:40). That startling reality leads us to conclude, “Who then can believe?” Everyone who God the Father draws to God the Son not only can, but will believe. Jesus taught, *“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day”* (John 6:44). Which promise causes us to wonder, “Who does God the Father draw to God the Son?” The answer to that question is, “Everyone He has chosen in eternity.” Paul taught, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love”* (Ephesians 1:3-4).

This wonderful, amazing glory makes us think about the words Bob Kauflin wrote in a song.

I was blinded by my sin,
had no ears to hear Your voice.

Did not know Your love within,
had no taste for heaven's joy.
Then Your Spirit gave me life,
opened up Your word to me.
Thru the gospel of your Son,
gave me endless hope and peace.

(Bob Kauflin, 2006, *Sovereign Grace Praise*).

That is the glory of God the Father and God the Son!

Eternal Life Responds Correctly to God's Glory (vv.3-5).

Those blessed recipients of eternal life know God (v.3). In fact, the text states that eternal life is the only kind of life that knows the only true God. Jesus said, "*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God*" (v.3a). This is what eternal life looks like. People who have eternal life know the only true God. To know is not simply to be familiar with or to no facts about. The word in this use speaks of an intimate relationship.

To know God as this text puts it is to know about God, to know the character and person of God, but most important to know the power, authority, and care of God through being reconciled to Him. Being religious is not the key. People in the Old Testament were very religious. But a perennial problem in the Old Testament was that people who had God's law had been taught all the traditions and still chose not to be in fellowship with God. Hosea preached God's concern, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children*" (Hosea 4:6).

The good news is that in the future kingdom everyone in the world will know God and be in fellowship with Him. The prophet Habakkuk promised, "*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea* (Habakkuk 2:14).

But in our age, stuck between the past and the future, the person who really knows God gives evidence to that truth in a faith that truly leans on Him on a continuing basis. We who know God should be known as people who, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do*

not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths (Proverbs 3:5-6). Trusting God and leaning on Him to determine our paths is not just a good idea. It is a description of eternal life. Eternal life is not so much length of life as it is life lived in intimate association with the Creator. The nature of eternal life is far more important than the length of eternal life. That is why believers have eternal life right now!

More than knowing God so intimately, eternal life knows Jesus Christ is co-equal with God. We know God "*and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*" (v.3b). If we truly know and trust God, we truly trust Jesus' teaching about who and what He is. Therefore, knowing God the Father alone is not sufficient for eternal life. It is true that if we really know God the Father in the sense of intimate fellowship, we will also know, believe, and accept His Son. If we know only God the Father and reject God the Son, that is a fearful thing. No sinner can approach God apart from the work of the Son. Maybe that is why the "god" of most false religions never grants its followers peace.

In fact, we come to know God fully only because God is revealed in Jesus (Heb. 1:1-3). Knowledge of God through Christ is obvious in a life of fellowship, faith, and obedience. No person ever has or ever will have good reason for not knowing God. Evidence for knowing God abounds (vv.4-5). Most obviously, God the Son revealed God. He confessed, "*I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do*" (v.4).

Obviously, Jesus did what the first Adam failed to do. God created Adam in His image. The first Adam failed to reflect a true image of the glory of God. Because of Adam's failure, now instead of reflecting God our Creator, our human nature reflects the character of God's enemy Satan. Satan sought to rob God of His glory. Human nature does the same thing from the cradle to the grave.

But Jesus Christ, God the Son, the Second Adam, reflected the full and perfect glory of God. The world saw the glory of God in Jesus' teaching. The world saw the glory of God in Jesus' miracles. Jesus simply illustrated to us the principle He taught, "*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16).

And for His good works and kind deeds, His world crucified Him. Most people conclude that the cross was the most embarrassing, humiliating failure imaginable. But God in His wisdom turned the cross of shame into His crowning glory. On the cross, God showed the sinful world incomprehensible love. He took all the penalty, all the consequences of sin, and placed it on Himself in His Son. Now He offers eternal life through the Son for His own glory.

As a result of that amazing work, God the Son is already glorified. To that end Jesus prayed, “*And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed*” (v.5). God the Son shared equal glory with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in eternity. When it came time to win salvation, God the Son laid aside His glory and came to earth. Having paid the price for sin, He returned to the presence of God the Father and took up His glory again.

This work of salvation is the heart of Jesus. His prayer revealed His heart for the gospel. It is His gospel, His story. He won salvation for sinners to the glory of the Father and to His own glory. Only very foolish people will consider the work of Jesus and then walk away rejecting it. Again, we do well to heed John’s conclusion: *But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:31).*