

The Lord's Prayer, Pt. 1 (John 17:1–5)

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INTRODUCTION

1. We begin to examine the prayer of Jesus before He entered the Garden of Gethsemane. Some have argued that John actually records His prayer in Gethsemane; however, what John records is not found in the synoptic Gospels. Neither did John record what the synoptics report. So, are there two prayers or only one? Note John 18:1.

Comparing the two prayers, observe that both reveal Jesus' resolution and horror, His filial obedience and personal agony. The difference is that John 17 (called the high-priestly prayer) focuses on *the disciples' welfare* after His departure while Gethsemane focuses on *the Savior's submission* to the will of God.

2. This prayer does not stand on its own as seen in the opening words (v. 1), "*These words*" likely refers to those spoken at the end of the preceding chapter (16:33). Then Jesus prayed in the presence of the disciples that they might see that while they suffered, the Father would be keeping, protecting, and making them holy while they remained in the world. They needed to hear this prayer.
3. The prayer is a summary of sorts of the Gospel of John to this point. The principle theme is the *glorification* of the Father through the *glorification* of the Son. The subtheme is the *revelation* of the Father to those given Him out of the world.
4. The synoptics record several references to Jesus' prayers, but little is recorded of the content of those prayers. The sole exception is the so-called "*Lord's Prayer*" (better called the disciples' prayer; Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4). John documents two additional prayers, one at the tomb of Lazarus (11:41, 42) and one when He recognized that His hour had come (12:27, 28).
6. It should be noted that Jesus can pray *for* us, but He cannot pray *with* us. Jesus' relationship to the Father is unique, and He does not share our weaknesses and follies.
7. Finally, observe the quality of Jesus' praying. It has a child-like quality of confidence and complete trust. It is reverent and submissive to the Heavenly Father. The prayer has three sections: Christ's prayer for Himself, asking the Father to reward His obedience (vv. 1–5); Christ's prayer for His disciples, those given Him out of the world (vv. 6–19), and Christ's prayer for His church (vv. 20–26). There are three important truths that must be noted in this opening.

I. The Son's Argument

1. Jesus addressed God as "*Father*," being His beloved Son. Again, one cannot but be reminded of Psalm 2:7). That decree is followed by the invitation to *ask* (v. 8). John 17 is the Son's response (John 17:1, 2).
2. Again, the powerful argument that grants all believers the right to access the Father is founded on this divine principle. Jesus informed the disciples (John 16:26–28).
3. The heart of all interaction with the Father in the things of God is *the will of God* (Mark 3:35; Matthew 7:21; 1 John 2:15–17). Jesus defined eternal life as knowing the Father—an intimate relational knowing. There can be no knowing the Father by those set on loving the world.

II. The Son's Attitude

1. *Jesus' attitude* was one of humble but confident expectation. His love-relationship to the Father was unquestioned, open, and firm (John 11:41, 42). It is this confidence that Jesus sought to instill in the disciples in His final instructions (John 14:13, 14). Indeed, this basic instruction *to ask* is repeated *eight* times in those three chapters.

2. Jesus recognized that He was in a spiritual battle that required Heaven’s attention (Revelation 19:11, 13; compare Revelation 6:1, 2; 15–17). The vision of Revelation 19 describes this day of coming wrath. It also depicts the armies of heaven (19:14) as riding white horses. They follow Jesus who strikes down the nations and rules them with a rod of iron as King of kings and Lord of lords, the very words used in Psalm 2:9. While it may not appear this is what is happening in the world, be assured it is happening.
3. That is why Paul instructs the saints to “*be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might*” (Ephesians 6:10; 18). The saints must understand they are in a spiritual war and must prepare for it. The great privilege of the relationship of the believer to Jesus in this battle must be governed in the believer’s prayer life (Romans 8:15–17; Hebrews 4:16; Ephesians 3:12, 13).

III. The Son’s Approach (v. 2)

1. Adam was supposed to have authority over God’s creation, but he sinned. Therefore, God sent His own Son to accomplish this task—to rule with righteousness over the earth as God’s steward. God’s plan is to destroy His sin-damaged earth, but He will restore it to its original state (2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 65:17; 66:2). In order for the children of Adam to carry out this authority, they also must be renewed or re-born (2 Corinthians 5:17–21). Jesus was the agent of the original creation (John 1:1–3). He is the only option for the new creation in which the sons of Adam can again bear God’s image. Therefore, Jesus was to give them *eternal life*. In order for Jesus to fulfill this work, He must die as their substitute to free them from the curse of sin (Isaiah 53:10). This creates a direct connection between humanity and God again. Therefore, God must glorify Christ.
2. Jesus also defines what eternal life means (v. 3). The word translated *know* is *ginosko*, a full and relational knowledge. In turn, Jesus is glorified *in them* (v. 10). When Jesus returns (2 Thessalonians 1:8), He will then be fully glorified in His saints. Thus, Paul declared, “*To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12).

In Closing

How is your love relationship with the Father? How involved are you in the great work of the kingdom of God, pressing toward the new creation? Are you praying as Jesus urged in His last instruction before the cross?

“How many Christians there are who cannot pray, and who seek by effort, resolve, joining prayer circles, etc., to cultivate in themselves the ‘holy art of intercession,’ and all to no purpose. Here for them and for all is the only secret of a real prayer life—‘be filled with the Spirit,’ who is ‘the Spirit of grace and supplication’” (J. Stuart Holden).