

Lord Teach Us To Pray

The Greatest Prayer in the Bible

Lesson 2

INTRODUCTION:

- I. One essential element that should be found in the life of every Christian is prayer.
 - A. And yet, there is a great amount of confusion over the PURPOSE of prayer, the KINDS of prayer, WHEN to pray, what we can pray FOR, and even HOW to pray. Why is this? I think there are really two basic reasons,
 1. Part of the problem comes from a lack of teaching on the subject of prayer.
 - a. Some preachers and Bible class teachers don't see a need to cover this subject as often as others because we just ASSUME every Christian already KNOWS how to pray.
 - b. But surprisingly, prayer is one of the most frequently requested sermon or Bible class topics among Christians today.

- c. People often don't feel they're getting everything out of their prayers because they're not sure they really know how, when or why they should be praying.
 - d. And they're either afraid or ashamed over the thought of approaching the throne of Almighty God in heaven.
2. Part of the problem ALSO comes from a lack of practice.
- a. We simply don't pray as often as we should, or find ourselves praying only when a need suddenly arises, or when calamity strikes without warning.
 - b. Our prayers become something like a fire extinguisher.
 - (1). When a blaze suddenly erupts in our life we rush over to our prayer fire extinguisher, break the glass panel that says, "Break In Case of Emergency" (because that's the only time we use it), grab our prayer fire extinguisher and desperately attempt to fight the flames of some disaster or calamity.
 - (2). And when the flames seem to be getting out of control, we suddenly realize we aren't using our prayer fire extinguisher properly, because we not only lack experience, we've never bothered to read the instructions!

- II. And so, to help us learn more about prayer I want us to take a close look at the greatest prayer in the Bible.
 - A. It takes about six minutes to read this prayer out loud, and read it reverently. So, it's certainly not a LENGTHY prayer, but it's a prayer of GREAT DEPTH and MEANING.
 - 1. In his book "All The Prayers In The Bible," Dr. Herbert Lockyer says there are 650 prayers recorded in the Bible, but NONE of them can even BEGIN to compare to the prayer Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven on the night before His crucifixion.
 - 2. It's the prayer recorded in John chapter 17.
 - B. What is it about this prayer that makes it so great?
 - 1. When we take a closer look at this prayer, there are at least FOUR REASONS why this prayer is so significant.

BODY:

- I. First, this prayer's greatness comes from the One who PRAYED the prayer.
 - A. Of course, that Person was none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - 1. Not only is He the Son of God, but more importantly He is God the Son – eternal God Who came to earth in human form, and lived a sinless life in the flesh.

2. When we look at the gospel accounts of the life of Christ, we see that each one emphasizes a different ATTRIBUTE of Jesus.
 - a. For example, Matthew emphasizes Christ the KING – the promised MESSIAH of the Old Testament scriptures.
 - b. Mark, on the other hand, emphasizes Jesus the SERVANT.
 - c. Luke emphasizes Jesus as the SON OF MAN, and focuses more on the HUMANITY of Jesus.
 - d. But JOHN'S gospel presents the DEITY of Jesus Christ. In fact, John summarizes this fact in the 20th chapter of his gospel.

(1). **John 20:30-31** – *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

- B. THIS is why this particular prayer of Jesus is included in John's gospel. It magnifies the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ is God the Son, and almost EVERY VERSE in John 17 expresses this great fact.

1. For example, only God the Son could ask the Father to GLORIFY Him. **(READ: John 17:1)**

- a. In **Exodus 33:18**, Moses asked to SEE God's glory, but in this verse Jesus asked to RECEIVE God's glory, and He identified this glory as being the SAME glory He had with the Father "*before the world was.*" (**John 17:5**)
 - b. The ONLY one who could rightfully claim to have the same glory as God "*before the world was*" would be One who was ALSO God – One who was ALSO Divine, One who was ALSO Deity.
2. Furthermore, only God can give sinners ETERNAL LIFE, and yet Jesus said God had given HIM that authority. (**John 17:1**)
 3. And notice in verse 3 that Jesus puts Himself on an EQUAL BASIS with God. (**READ: John 17:3**)
 - a. Jesus says that sinners are granted eternal life when they come to know God AND when they come to know Jesus Christ. Who else could make that claim except God the Son?
- C. Furthermore, four times in this prayer, Jesus said that God the Father SENT HIM. (**READ: John 17:3, 18, 21, 25**)
1. Of course, any apostle or prophet could make that claim because they were ALSO sent by God.

2. But no apostle or prophet could claim that he “*came forth FROM God*” **(READ: John 17:8; 16:28)**
- D. Also, any Christian could pray, “all Mine are Yours” – in other words, any Christian could say to God, “everything I have is Yours.” But only the Son of God could add, “*and YOURS are MINE!*” **(READ: John 17:10)**
1. Jesus claimed to possess EVERYTHING that the Father possessed! And that’s because He’s also ONE with the Father. **(READ: John 17:11, 21)**
- E. There are a number of OTHER evidences in this prayer proving the Lord’s deity, but consider this. . .
1. If ANYONE else prayed in this manner and made these claims, we would conclude that he was either CONFUSED or MENTALLY DISTURBED. Only Jesus Christ, GOD THE SON, could pray this prayer.
- F. But the fact that Jesus prayed to God in this manner and made these claims raises a question. Why would God the Son pray?
1. Over and over again the gospels present Jesus as a man of prayer. In fact, there are at least 19 INSTANCES of Jesus praying.

2. So, why did He pray all the time? The REASON is because Jesus was dependent on the Father. Everything He did during His earthly ministry – all of His WORDS and all of His WORKS – were in total dependence on God.
 3. Now if Jesus – with ALL His POWER and ALL His PERFECTION – found it necessary to depend on prayer, how much MORE do you and I, with all our IMPERFECTIONS and all our WEAKNESSES, need to depend on prayer!
 4. The answer to THAT question should be obvious!
- II. There's ANOTHER reason why the prayer of Jesus in John chapter 17 is great, and that's because of the OCCASION that DEMANDED the prayer. So, what was the SITUATION, and how did it relate to THIS prayer?
- A. Well, to begin with, Jesus had just finished instructing His disciples (John 13-16). And after Jesus TAUGHT His disciples, He PRAYED for them.
 1. Why? Because PRAYER and the WORD OF GOD go together.
 - a. Imagine how strong and faithful we would be if we had the BIBLE, but no PRAYER? We would have the TRUTH, but we wouldn't have the POWER to practice that truth.

- b. On the other hand, imagine what it would be like if we had PRAYER, but no BIBLE. Prayer would draw us closer to God, but we would have no DIRECTION.
 - c. Either way, it would be like having a one-way conversation. The Bible without prayer would be like God speaking to us, but we couldn't tell Him about our deepest needs and desires. And having prayer without the Bible would be like speaking to God, but hearing nothing in return. In fact, we wouldn't really have any assurance that He was even HEARING our prayer, or that He was even THERE!
2. That's why every faithful Christian needs to understand that BIBLE STUDY and PRAYER compliment each other.
- a. Samuel the prophet certainly understood this.
 - (1). **1 Sam 12:23-24** – *Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to PRAY for you; but I will TEACH you the good and the right way.*
 - b. The apostles certainly understood this as well.
 - (1). When the issue came up of caring for the daily needs of the Grecian widows, the apostles appointed seven men to handle this problem. Why?

- (2). **Acts 6:4** – *But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*
- c. The apostle Paul also understood prayer and Bible study work hand in hand.
 - (1). **Acts 20:32** – *So now, brethren, I commend you to God [THAT'S PRAYER] and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up [THAT COMES FROM BIBLE STUDY].*
 - d. One of the reasons we have unbalanced Christians in the Lord's church today is because of a lack of prayer FURTHER complicated by a lack of study of God's Word.
 - e. That's why we need BOTH!
- B. But Jesus not only prayed for His DISCIPLES, Jesus was also prayed for HIMSELF. **(John 17:1-5)**
 - 1. Remember, Jesus was only hours away from the cross.
 - a. When Jesus began His ministry, He was baptized by John, and prayed to the Father. **(Luke 3:21)**
 - b. Throughout His ministry He depended on prayer – rising up early in the morning to pray **(Mark 1:35)**, and even praying all night **(Luke 6:12)**.

- c. But now that He was approaching the end of His life, Jesus once again spends a lot of time in prayer.
 2. Do you realize what the consequences could have been if Jesus had NOT prayed for Himself?
 - a. If Jesus had NOT prayed for the Father to glorify Him and receive Him back into heaven, you and I would have no Redeemer, no Savior, no Mediator, no High Priest Who has ascended into the heavens. And, worst of all, we would have no salvation.
 - b. Therefore, when Jesus was praying for HIMSELF, He was ALSO praying for US.
 3. So, in praying for Himself, the Lord shows us there are times when prayer is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL – not only in the everyday affairs of life, but ESPECIALLY when we face difficult times in our life.
- III. But there's a THIRD reason why the prayer in John 17 is also great, and THAT'S because of the PETITIONS in the prayer.
 - A. We need to always remember a fundamental truth about prayer – Prayer that ASKS nothing ACCOMPLISHES nothing.

1. While the outline of this prayer is relatively simple, the things Jesus requested are profound.
 - a. First, as we've already seen, Jesus prayed for HIMSELF. **(John 17:1-5)**
 - (1). He asked the Father give to Him the glory He had before He came to earth.
 - (2). And because God ANSWERED that prayer, you and I enjoy the salvation of our souls.
 - b. Second, Jesus prayed for His DISCIPLES. **(John 17:6-19)**
 - (1). To fulfill their mission of preaching the gospel of Christ, these disciples needed to go out into a world FILLED with sin, and so they needed all the HELP they could get.
 - (a). Therefore, God needed to KEEP THEM from the temptations Satan would constantly throw in their path.
 - (2). But BEFORE they could fulfill their mission to preach a resurrected Christ, God needed to SANCTIFY THEM by the truth.

- (a). They would be set them apart from the WORLD by their faithfulness to the truth contained in God's Word.
- c. Finally, Jesus prayed for THE WHOLE CHURCH. (**John 17:20-26**)
- (1). The Lord's petition in THESE verses is that God's people might have UNITY: *"That they all may be one..."* (**v. 21**)
- (2). The Lord prayed that there would be a common faith and a common love between US, so that the world would believe our MESSAGE.
- (3). The apostle Paul put it this way: *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Cor 1:10)*
- (4). Unless we do everything WE can do to bring about unity among the disciples of Christ, WE are keeping the prayer of Jesus from being fulfilled.

IV. And finally, the prayer in John 17 is great because of the VICTORY it gives us NOW.

A. There's a close link between the final words of Jesus to His disciples in the UPPER ROOM, and the words of Jesus in THIS prayer.

1. In the Upper Room Jesus said, *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

(John 16:33)

a. In other words, Jesus told His disciples that in HIM they would have peace, but in the WORLD they would have tribulation.

b. However, there was no need to worry because the Lord said He has overcome the world.

2. However, in the prayer of John 17, Jesus tells His disciples how they can ALSO overcome the world. **(John 17:6-19)**

a. When Jesus talked about overcoming the *"world,"* He was talking about the ETHICAL and MORAL use of the word "world" – those things that are OF the world, or are WORLDLY.

- b. THIS is the “*WORLD*” we belonged to BEFORE we were saved – BEFORE we were redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- c. The apostle Paul says, it’s the *WORLD* “*in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.*” (**Eph. 2:2**)
- e. But when we obeyed the gospel of Christ, we received citizenship in heaven (**Phil. 3:20-21**) so that we no longer belong to this world system.
- f. While we are IN this world PHYSICALLY, we do not BELONG to this world SPIRITUALLY. We’ve been DELIVERED and SET FREE!

CONCLUSION:

- I. And so, here is the greatest prayer in the Bible – the prayer of Jesus in the 17th chapter of John.
 - A. And in that prayer Jesus prayed for Himself – that He would be glorified by the Father with the glory He had in heaven.

1. We ALSO need to pray for ourselves – because, even though our ultimate goal is to get to heaven, we will need God’s help along the way.
- B. Jesus also prayed for His disciples – that they would be protected and sanctified in the work they had of taking the gospel of Christ to the world.
1. We ALSO need to pray for those who TAKE the word of God into the world. If the apostle Paul urged Christians to pray for him – to pray that he might boldly proclaim the Word – then I want to urge you to do the same for me, because having the courage to stand up and speak the truth of God’s word is no small task.
- C. And Jesus prayed for the whole church – for all of US who would eventually become His disciples through the preaching of the apostles.
1. And so, we ALSO need to pray for the whole church. If the LORD prayed that there would be a common faith and a common love between US (so that the world would believe our message), then WE need to be praying for the SAME THING.
- D. And finally, in this prayer the Lord shows us how WE can ALSO overcome the world.

1. We overcome the world by truly KNOWING God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ – and THIS comes through a knowledge of the Word of God.
2. We also overcome the world by not being OF the world.
3. And finally, we overcome the world by being ONE – being united together in love.

II. Are YOU doing YOUR part to make this prayer of Jesus a reality?

A. Take a CLOSE look at your life.

1. Are you doing your part to be a faithful disciple, or are you someone who has either gone BACK into the world, or who has never LEFT the world?
2. If you've gone BACK into the world, or if you've never LEFT it, and you SINCERELY want to CHANGE that, then I've got some GOOD NEWS – the Lord is offering you an opportunity to BECOME a faithful disciple at this very moment.