

The High Priestly Prayer

John 17: 20-26

After sharing the Last Supper with the disciples, having washed their feet and exposing His betrayal, Jesus and the disciples make their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. As they travel Jesus has shared much with them and now pauses to pray. He prays for Himself as the crucifixion is quickly approaching. He prays for the disciples as they endure His departure and continue His work. Finally He prays for all believers who will receive the Gospel in salvation.

I am particularly interested in the words Jesus prayed concerning the believers to come, but I want to quickly look at His prayer for Himself and the disciples. As Jesus prayed for Himself, we discover it was:

1. A Prayer for Endurance (1a)
2. A Prayer for Exaltation (1b)
3. A Prayer of Expectation (2-3)
4. A Prayer of Examination (4)
5. A Prayer for Endorsement (5)

As Jesus prayed for the disciples, He mentions:

1. Their Salvation (6)
2. Their Preservation (7-11)
3. Their Sanctification (12-19)

Now I want to discuss Jesus' prayer for the believers to follow, including you and me. I want to look at the [intercessions](#) He offers for us as we consider: [The High Priestly Prayer](#).

I. Jesus Prayed for Our Unity (20-21) – As Jesus prays for all who will come to saving faith in Him down through the ages, He prays for unity among believers. He prayed for our unity:

A. Biblically (20) – **Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.** Jesus not only prayed for the disciples, but those who would hear the Gospel they shared and believe through the Word of God. Jesus came as the incarnate Word, the living Word, and the disciples would preach and share the written Word.

- Jesus prayed for our unity in the Scriptures. Many refuse to believe that Jesus is the only means of salvation. Few are willing to accept the Bible as the final and absolute authority for all of life's practice and salvation from sin. We must stand in agreement, willing to boldly proclaim the Gospel to those who need to hear. It is essential that the lost hear the Gospel proclaimed. Rom.10:13-14; 17 – For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ^[14] How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ^[17] So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

B. Spiritually (21a) – *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:* Jesus prayed for our unity spiritually as well. He enjoyed perfect fellowship with God the Father, being one with Him. He desired each believer to enjoy spiritual unity with the Godhead. John 15:4-5 – *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* ^[5] *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

- As we seek spiritual unity with the Lord, we must also strive for unity within the body of Christ. In fact, we cannot enjoy unity with the Lord apart from unity with fellow believers. 1 Cor.1:10 – *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

C. Publicly (21b) – *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* Jesus knew unity among the church with God and one another would prove beneficial for the believer and necessary for reaching those who had yet to believe. He desired the saved to stand together in the faith in order to be an effective witness to the world.

- My how this needs to be sought and heeded today. Many have no desire for the church because of the division and turmoil within the church. We cannot expect others to desire what we have if all they experience is fighting and discord among believers. Our unity in the faith stands as a strong testimony to the Gospel. We will never reach the lost if we can't agree in unity!

II. Jesus Prayed for Our Purity (22-23) – Jesus prays for the purity of the church. He desires us to live righteously through Him. Notice He prayed concerning:

A. Our Possession (22-23a) – **And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:** ^[23] **I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;** Jesus was aware of the glory He possessed. It was veiled by human flesh, but He maintained His deity. He reveals that His glory is given to us through salvation that we may be made perfect in Him. Now, don't misunderstand the text. Christ does not imply that in salvation we possess the deity of the Godhead. He refers to the aspects of the divine life available through a relationship with Him. Every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, enabled through Him. Jesus refers to the power abiding in us that enables us to live sanctified lives!

- This is a mark of a genuine believer. I do not imply that we live perfectly and above sin, but our lives are lived in light of the Lord and His holy nature. The old man of sin has died and we were resurrected a new creature in Christ. Our lives now reflect the Lord rather than the man of flesh. As we grow and mature, our lives ought to reflect the Lord more and more! We need His glorious power working in our lives.

B. Our Confession (23b) – **and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.** As we grow in the Lord, living sanctified lives, the world takes notice. Jesus prayed our lives would reveal the Savior we serve. He prayed our lives would be an undeniable testimony to the world of His saving grace. He knew changed lives would reveal a greater power than mere human ability. How can the world deny a changed life? They have to admit that something miraculous has taken place.

- I am glad the Lord interceded for us and that He continues to do so. This is a challenging statement. We are responsible to live in such a way that the world can see the Lord through us. I think it was D.L. Moody that said, "Out of 100 men, one will read the Bible. The other 99 will read the Christian." What does the world see as they look at us individually? What does our community think of Fellowship? Are we representing the Lord in the way we should?

III. Jesus Prayed for Our Eternity (24) – Jesus knew He was going away, but by rising triumphant over death, He would secure eternal life for the saved. As He looked toward Calvary, Jesus was praying about our eternal future. He mentioned:

A. Our Home (24a) – **Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.** He knew His work on earth was almost complete. He would soon ascend back to heaven to dwell with the Father. He desired that all the saved be able to inhabit heaven with Him. Jesus purposed in His heart that we would have the privilege of dwelling with Him in heaven throughout eternity.

- Just prior to praying this high priestly prayer, Jesus offered words of comfort to the disciples, and in essence all who believe in Him by faith. **John 14:1-3 – Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.** ^[2] **In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.** ^[3] **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.** Heaven isn't a fairy tale or foolish dream. It is a real place, being prepared for the children of God. We will one day enter into to our eternal home, enjoying the presence of our Lord and Savior!

B. Our Healing (24b) – **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.** Jesus knew life would be difficult for the disciples and all who would come to faith after them. Our world is dominated by sin and we suffer the adverse effects of it. We struggle with the flesh and the trials of life. Jesus knew this was a temporary existence for the believer. He purposed that we would be able to inhabit heaven, experiencing His glory forever more.

- Life is difficult at best, but we are not meant to dwell in this life forever. This life serves as a time of preparation for eternity. We will one day lay aside this temple of flesh for a new glorified body that will worship around the throne of God, experiencing the fullness of Jesus' glory!
Rev.21:22-23 – And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. ^[23] **And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.**

IV. Jesus Prayed for Our Charity (25-26) – As Jesus concludes His prayer, He prays for our charity, our love for one another and for the Lord. He speaks of:

A. Our Hope (25) – **O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.** Jesus realized the world did not know nor love Him, but He had known the Father and loved Him. The disciples and those who would follow would face times of discouragement and doubt. There would be times when the faith of believers is tested. Jesus knew our love for Him would carry us through. Our love for Christ and faith in Him affords our relationship with the Father.

- We all know that life is hard. There are times when our faith is weak. There are times when it seems the Lord is distant and silent in our lives. During those times the enemy attacks our faith and tries to create doubt. Jesus stands as our hope and our stay. Through faith in Him we see the Father. Through faith in Him we receive the Spirit. Our relationship with Christ brings great hope!

B. Our Help (26) – *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.* Jesus knew His time on earth was almost over. He knew the life expected of the saved would require more than we possess physically. If we were to make it, we would need a source of strength and comfort. This is found in His love. Through our love for the Lord and for one another, we draw strength from our Savior. It is impossible to live for the Lord apart from love. We are never more like our Lord than when we love as He did. We are never closer to Him than when we show forth His great love.

- Jesus knew love was vitally important in our lives. He spoke of the Great Commandment of love, and the second like unto it: Loving God and loving others. When our hearts are filled with love for the Lord and others, we can live victoriously through Him.

Conclusion: This passage has always been dear to me. I realize our Lord was facing the agonies of the cross and weight of sin, and yet He took time to pray for us. This is not a prayer that was prayed for everyone else. This prayer was offered for the church. Christ prayed for us individually as He approached Calvary.

This challenges me to lean upon Him for strength and direction. It challenges me to make prayer a priority as He did. It challenges me to love as He loved. His love was proven for all humanity as He bled and died for our sin.

Are there needs in your life? There can be no doubt the Father heard and answered this prayer of our Lord. He is ready to meet your needs as well. If you are unsaved, Jesus desires you to be among those who will dwell with Him for eternity. Come as our Lord leads!