

## 169. The Gospel of John—17:1-5

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*"With Jesus Behind the Veil" Part 3*

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(2/6/22)

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In our study in John's Gospel, we recently entered Chapter 17 and as such—we are standing on 'holy ground.' I say that because many Christian scholars consider this Chapter to be the "Holy of Holies" of the Gospels.

To recap: Jesus and His disciples (minus Judas) have finished the Passover meal, left the upper room and are now on their way to the Mount of Olives where Jesus will spend the next few hours in prayer before being arrested, tried, and crucified.

Along the way Jesus continued a teaching that He started in the upper room—a final discourse directed at His closest men in preparation for them taking over the ministry in His absence.

As we come to John 17, the Lord stops teaching His disciples and starts praying to His Father.

This prayer is divided up into 3 main parts:

- **Jesus Prays for Himself—verses 1-5**
  - **Jesus Prays for His Disciples—verses 6-19**
  - **Jesus Prays for All Believers—verses 20-26**
- I. **Jesus Prays for Himself—verses 1-5**

**John 17:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You..."

Let me stop and draw your attention to the statement by our Lord—"Father, the hour has come..."

I want you to be aware that all the way through Jesus' ministry (especially as recorded in John's Gospel) we get the definite impression that He was living according to a divine '*time clock*' or *schedule*. We constantly see Him saying things like "*My hour has not yet come*" and "*My time is at hand*."

Jesus' whole life was planned out in eternity past—everywhere He would go, when He would get there, who He came in contact with, what miracles He did—and so on.

It's very clear as we read the Gospels that Jesus Christ was on a divine 'timetable', that He was working off of a divine schedule—and He never missed an appointment:

- *The Bible says he was born "in the fullness of time".*
- *He died when his time came, and He rose from the dead on the third day according to the Scriptures (right on time).*

- *And He's going to return right on schedule—the signs are indicating it will be soon.*

Jesus lived according to a divine plan, a divine schedule that the Father had ordained in eternity past—and so must you and me.

#### **Ephesians 2:8-10 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast.<sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God has a plan for all of our lives as His people—a plan that will only be fulfilled if we live our Christians lives under the control and leading of the Holy Spirit!

Too many Christians never fulfill the plan of God for their lives because they are not sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit—in other words, they put their head down and charge thru their day doing what they want, when they want and with whom they want.

Not only will this result in a lack of fruit in their walk with God—but it's a sure way to be overcome and defeated by the world! There is only victory in the Christian life when we are in the will of God for our lives.

Or in other words, when we are where He wants us to be, in the place He wants to lead our lives to—that and that alone will be a place of victory and fruitfulness!

→ Relate to the children of Israel that God led from the wilderness into the Promised Land which was His perfect will for their lives—the place of victory, fruitfulness and blessing.

Remember the context of John 17—Jesus had ended His farewell teaching to His disciples with a shout of victory: “**I have overcome the world!**” (John 16:33).

In this context ‘**the world**’ (*kosmos* in the Greek) refers to the ‘*fallen world system*’ that is controlled by the devil, and which is in rebellion against God—a system that is constantly trying to drag us back under its control.

When Jesus cried out, “**I have overcome the world!**”—He was telling us that if you and I will understand the victory He was about to secure and apply the truths revealed in this profound prayer into our lives—it would enable us to be overcomers too.

One of the profound principles that we glean right up front is that being an overcomer is directly linked to walking in the Spirit—or in other words, to being sensitive to where the Lord Jesus thru the power of the Holy Spirit is working and therefore leading you and I to be at any given time:

#### **John 12:26 (NKJV)**

<sup>26</sup> If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor [with victory and blessing].

This doesn't mean we simply try to be where God wants us to be—but we have to get there at the right time as well (like when Jesus went up to Samaria to keep a divine appointment with a woman by the well of Sychar).

I will warn you that the devil will try to use anyone he can to get you to operate on your own timetable and not on God's divine timetable—even those closest to you.

We see this in John 7 when Jesus' own half-brothers (who did not believe in Him initially) tried to get Him to conduct His ministry on their timetable instead of His Father's.

We see this in Chapter 7 with them chiding Him, challenging Him—even daring Him to go to Jerusalem and declare Himself openly as the Messiah when His time had not yet come for Him to do that—they said to Him:

**John 7:3-5 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> ...Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. <sup>4</sup> For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup> For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

They reasoned, "If you're really who you say you are, the long-awaited Messiah of Israel, why are you hiding out in the 'backwoods'—go to Jerusalem and make it official with all kinds of miracles and hoopla."

Of course, John tells us in verse 1 of Chapter 7 why Jesus was staying away from Jerusalem—"because the Jews [Jewish religious leadership] sought to kill Him."

Which is why He responded to His half-brother's challenge—"My time has not yet come" (verse 6)

Again, giving us the clear impression that He was living according to a very definite timetable—and He didn't want to needlessly provoke His enemies to try and kill Him before the time appointed by His Father. But then notice what He said to them—and this is what I really want to zero in on this for the remainder of our time this morning:

**John 7:6-9 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. <sup>7</sup> The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup> You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come." <sup>9</sup> When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.

"My time has not yet come—but your time is always ready." (verse 6)

Jesus is saying to them—"My life is being lived according to a divine schedule, according to the sovereign will of My Father God—but your lives are not on any such schedule."

By saying this, the Lord Jesus was alluding to the fact that an unbeliever's life isn't being lived according to God's schedule or program. The unbeliever wanders through life without a sense of eternal purpose or direction—which Paul the apostle acknowledged in Ephesians 2 when he said:

**Ephesians 2:1-3 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> 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, <sup>3</sup> among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

The word 'walked' in verse 2 is a Greek word that should be translated *meandered*. **Meander** is a word that carries with it the idea of 'walking without purpose'.

Usually, a person who is walking to a destination, who is walking with purpose is looking straight ahead and has a certain *gate* to their steps that tells you they have somewhere to go—that they have some place in mind where they have to be.

**When you see a person meandering you get the impression—  
they're not really going anywhere in particular.**

You see them walking down the street looking around, taking in their surroundings, stopping to look in store windows—they're just sort of wandering.

One man said, *"It takes me five minutes to walk from one end of the mall to the other—it takes my wife all day."*

And that's the difference between walking with purpose and meandering.

So, this word *meander* is the word that Paul uses in Ephesians 2—and he uses this word because he wants to contrast our lives *before* we turned them over to Jesus and then *after*. Paul is saying that before we received Jesus Christ into our hearts as our Lord and Savior we were just *meandering* through life—that is, we really didn't have any eternal purpose to our lives.

We weren't really going anywhere—we thought we were, but in the eyes of God there was no *real* purpose to our lives—we were just wandering from one mundane thing to another.

So, Paul says that we were once just meandering through life—"according to the course of this world."

The word '**world**' doesn't mean 'earth' but the '*world system*'—the very thing Jesus said at the end of John 16 He had overcome and has empowered His people to overcome as well.

The word '**course**' has its root in the Greek word for "*weathervane*".

A weathervane is also called a "*wind-vane*" because it points in whatever direction the wind is blowing!

So, the idea that Paul is communicating to us is that before we knew Jesus we were being turned and blown in whatever direction the prevailing philosophical, ideological and moral winds of the world system were blowing us.

In other words, whatever the latest trend or fad was in fashion, music, technology or morality—we would be swept up by it and flow right along with it—we just followed the crowd, and the justification was, "*everybody's doing it—so get on board.*" (Peer pressure is very powerful)

A wise Christian mother once said to her little boy who was being ridiculed by the other children for not going along with them in their desire to do mischief—"Son, any dead fish can float downstream—it takes a live healthy fish to swim against the current."

**So once again, to *meander* means to wander aimlessly or casually without any eternal purpose.**

That is a description of how the unbeliever walks through life—they have only one appointment that they *have* to keep—and that is with death.

**The only life that counts, the only life that has eternal value in the eyes of God—  
is a Christian's life that is being led by the Holy Spirit and lived on purpose—**

As one author put it—

*"Only a Christian has any sense of divine purpose and direction. For the Christian every moment, every second"*

*counts for eternity and is to be used for the glory of God because you've been redeemed by Him. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: 'You no longer belong to yourself; you were bought out of slavery with the precious blood of Jesus Christ to Whom you now belong. Therefore, you are to live for Him and bring Him glory thru the life that now belongs to Him.'*

So, once again—your life has been purchased by God and you are to now use it for Him. That doesn't mean you can't go on vacation, watch a ballgame, or spend the afternoon with a dear friend—but it does mean that you and I can't waste precious time either.

To quote that same author again—

*"Is everyday being used to serve God because you belong to him? Most Christians dilly dally and frivolously waste their time on meaningless, empty things. Wasting precious time hanging around watching TV or generally sleeping their life away. If most of us spend our employers time the way we spend God's time—we'd be looking for a new job! Listen Christian, you are living for an eternal purpose. Every moment counts."*

#### **John 9:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> [Jesus said] I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the night is coming when no one can work.*

This is a solemn reminder to everyone who is a Christian that life's "day" is swiftly passing—and the night is coming (physical death) when our service on earth will be forever over.

As someone has said—***"There is only one life it will soon be past and only what is done for Christ will last."***

Imagine that the days of your life are like worthless pieces of fake money that you might see used in a board game—we'll call it the '*Game of Life.*' A game where God is letting you use your time to *buy* valuable opportunities to serve Him—opportunities that will bring you priceless eternal rewards in heaven.

The person whose time is spent on him or herself winds up with a worthless, wasted life—but the person who spends their time serving Jesus winds up with a precious life and a priceless eternity!

The great sixteenth-century reformer Philipp Melanchthon kept a record of every wasted moment and took his list to God in confession at the end of each day—it's a small wonder that God used him in such great ways.

#### **Psalms 90:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

None of us knows how many days we will have in our lives—but here we are being told to "make everyday count"! How? By walking with purpose and not wasting our opportunities to be used by God—

#### **Ephesians 5:15-17 (NLT2)**

<sup>15</sup> So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. <sup>16</sup> Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. <sup>17</sup> Don't act thoughtlessly [don't meander], but understand what the Lord wants you to do [live with eternal purpose].

Paul is pointing out to us that evil times create opportunities for good—opportunities actually created by evil days.

Henry Ford said this during the Great Depression—"These are actually good times—the problem is only a few people know it." What others saw as *tragedy* Ford saw as *opportunity*—in his case the opportunity to make money.

The same is true for Christians today—only the opportunity set before us is not to make money but to save souls! For Christians these are very good times, the problem is only a few realize it (Colossians 3:2)—**so let's get busy!**

God is able to do exceedingly and abundantly in these last days to reach people with the Gospel. But how effective you're going to be in reaching people for Jesus and fulfilling the ministry God has ordained for you is going to depend on how sensitive you are to the leading of the Holy Spirit. That will be determined by how much time you spend with the Lord in prayer and in His Word.

There are no short cuts in being spiritually fruitful for the Lord any more than there are short cuts in growing real fruit as a farmer.

Let me close with some personal application from the words of our Lord Jesus Christ when He said, "**Father, the hour has come..." (verse 1)**

We could paraphrase this based on what Jesus said in John 13:1 to start the evening—"My hour has come." Of course, the Lord in saying this used to term '**hour**' to represent a moment in history—not a sixty-minute period of time.

A lot of you are discouraged because you've been praying for something for a long time—some of you for years (the salvation of your spouse, the return of a wayward (prodigal) son or daughter, the birth of a child...etc.)

Now you've pretty much given up that your prayers will ever be answered. If that is where you find yourself this morning—remember these two Scriptures:

**Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> To everything *there is* a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:

**Luke 18:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then [Jesus admonished us]...that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

Don't forget Zacharias and Elizabeth who prayed for a child for years...

**Luke 1:13 (NKJV)**

...But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son [on God's timetable], and you shall call his name John."

Look, I know that some of you are discouraged because of unanswered prayer—but very shortly your time might come, your 'hour' might be fulfilled for your prayers to be answered—so don't give up!

**God has got a timetable for everything He does—  
a timetable that is often quite different from ours!**

So be patient, keep praying and trust that God is never late, that His timing is always perfect!

**One last thing**—the Lord has created you and I “*for such a time as this*”—so don’t waste it!!

I know one thing for sure—this is our hour, our moment in history to stand up and shine for our Jesus!

We must like Him say to our Father in heaven—

*“My hour has come to glorify Your name thru my life on this earth. Break me Father, empty me of self, fill me with Your Spirit and use me for Your glory! In Jesus’ name!”*

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If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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