

170. The Gospel of John 17:3-4

With Jesus Behind The Veil-Part 4

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

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In our study in John's Gospel, we recently entered Chapter 17 which contains the most profound, the most holy prayer in all the Bible—the *real* 'Lord's prayer'! I say that because many Christian scholars consider this Chapter to be the "Holy of Holies" of the Gospels.

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 teaching directed at His closest men in preparation for them taking over the ministry He had begun.

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 17:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ 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, ² as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give **eternal life** to as many as You have given Him.

As we have pointed out, **the theme of John's Gospel is eternal life—which he talks about 54 times in his Gospel.** This was in fact the very thing that brought Jesus to earth in the first place— "*To seek and to save those who were lost*" (Luke 19:10)—or in other words, to give people eternal life.

John 17 contains a very intimate prayer that Jesus offered to His Father which consisted of the most important things that were on His heart that night—just hours before the Cross. And the very first thing He talked about with His Father was the life that the Father had sent Him to the world to give to anyone who would receive it—this was the **'life of God' or eternal life.**

John 17:3 (NKJV)

³ **And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

Eternal life is not about what you *do* (to earn it)—but about Who you *know* (to receive it)!

The Greek word for “know” is the word ‘*ginosko*’.

This is a word that often speaks of a deep love relationship—the kind of relationship that a person enters into with Jesus when they commit themselves to Him by faith:

John 10:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

When Jesus talks about *knowing* His sheep and them *knowing* Him—He uses the Greek word *ginosko* which means to know by experience. In other words, this is not the kind of ‘head knowledge’ that comes from studying and practicing religion—like the scribes, Pharisees and chief priests had.

They had head knowledge about God—
but they didn’t have a deep love relationship with God in their heart’s.

Ginosko knowledge speaks of the very intimate knowledge that a man and his wife have in marriage—as when we read in the O.T. that “Cain *knew* his wife and she bore him a son” or when we read in the New Testament how “Joseph didn’t *know* his wife Mary until after Jesus was born.”

So, the knowledge that brings eternal life is a deep intimate knowledge that a person enters into when they commit themselves to Jesus as their Savior. In other words, it isn’t a casual, superficial head knowledge based solely on facts.

It is not enough to simply believe that God exists—this will never save a lost soul from eternal hell—as James tells us in his epistle that even “the demons believe and tremble.” (James 2:19)

James’ point is that *passive* faith (mere head-knowledge) is not the kind of faith that saves—even the demons believe the facts about Jesus and the Gospel (that He is the virgin born Son of God, Who died for the sins of mankind and rose from the dead the third day).

REFLECTION: What is the difference between knowing about eternal life and obtaining eternal life?

Yet, even though Satan and his demons believe the facts of the Gospel—they certainly won’t be spending eternity in heaven!

- “So, are you saying that a person is not saved by faith alone? It sounds like you’re teaching that it’s faith plus human effort (commitment) that saves a person from hell?”

- No, I'm not saying that we are saved by faith plus works of any kind—we are saved by faith alone!

But there is a difference between the kind of faith that *saves* and the kind of faith that *doesn't save*—and our eternity depends on which one we have!

Listen carefully, there are a lot of people who have grown up in church that really do believe the facts about Jesus and the Gospel and yet are not saved (I was one of them)—because passive faith won't save anyone.

The kind of faith that is genuine and saves is not passive—it's active!

In other words, it isn't passive *head-knowledge* (knowing and even believing the facts of the Gospel) that saves a person from hell—as important as knowing the facts of the Gospel is!

Believing in Jesus with your 'head' is important but by itself it's not enough to get you to heaven unless you take the next step and receive Him into your heart by committing your life to Him "That's works!"—No that's saving faith!

John 1:12 (NKJV)

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

So, saving faith is believing in Jesus with your *head*—but then receiving Him into your *heart* as your Savior.

This is what is called "believing to the point of commitment!"

Let me illustrate it this way—someone can believe that the person they are dating is the most wonderful person they have ever met—someone they can see themselves spending the rest of their life with in marriage.

- But unless they actually believe **to the point of commitment** by pledging their life to that person (a member of the opposite sex), standing before God on their wedding day and vowing to love and be loyal to that person for the rest of their life—until they have done that they haven't actually entered into marriage.

The same is true when we talk about Jesus and salvation. A person can believe who Jesus is and in what He did for them—they can believe He is the most wonderful Person who has ever lived—the only true Savior of mankind.

But unless they take the next step and enter into a relationship with Jesus where they make a commitment to Him (as in marriage—a pledge to love Him above all others and to be committed to Him for the rest of their life)—until they have done that they haven't actually entered into salvation.

It's the commitment that brings about the relationship that puts you "in Christ" that saves you from hell—that is what '**saving faith**' is all about! That's why the Bible talks about salvation in marriage terms calling Jesus our Bridegroom and Christians the Bride of Christ.

REFLECTION: Define Saving Faith:

You don't become a Christian until you're willing to enter into the deepest kind of relationship with Jesus that two people can enter into—the marriage relationship. Even though physical marriage isn't perfect and marriage vows are sometimes broken—that couple is still married in the eyes of God.

The same is true when a person makes a commitment to Jesus—we often aren't faithful to Him—but we are still married to Jesus in the eyes of God and our relationship with Him is secure. ***The problem with many churchgoers is they want to 'date Jesus' but are not really serious about making a commitment to Him.***

Here the Lord is proposing *marriage* to them (salvation) and their response is—*"I just want to be friends Jesus."*

REFLECTION: What is the difference between head knowledge and commitment to something or someone?

But there can be no salvation (no eternal life) without believing in Jesus to the point of commitment and receiving Him as your Savior—your Bridegroom and Lord by covenant!

So, eternal life is a quality of existence that knows God—

John 17:3 (NKJV)

³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

We could paraphrase Jesus' words this way - *"Eternal life belongs to those who are connected to God in the deepest way possible—those who are one with Him in the deepest, most intimate kind of union as in marriage."*

The alternative to eternal life—is eternal death (in hell).

Just as spiritual life is being connected to God thru His Son, Jesus Christ—eternal death is being separated from God for all eternity by rejecting Jesus Christ as your Savior (again, by not believing in Him to the point of commitment).

- The Bible says that hell is forever—and calls it *'everlasting fire.'* (Matthew 18:8; 25:41)
- It is a place where *"the worm (of decay) never dies, and the fire of judgment is never quenched."* (Mark 9:48)
- Hell is called the *"Lake of Fire"*—a place in the outer darkness which burns with fire and brimstone and where there will be never ending *"weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth."* (Matthew 22:13; Matthew 24:51)

- It's a place where all unbelievers are sent—"for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever" Peter tells us (2 Peter 2:17).

John, in Revelation 14:10-11 says, "[they] shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night."

Jesus said that even as heaven is eternal—so is hell. (Matthew 25:46) There are only two choices a person has when it comes to eternity—receiving Jesus and having eternal life or rejecting Jesus and having eternal death.

- You say, "Not me. I'm neutral. I don't choose either of those options!"
- Sorry! Jesus said, "Either you're for Me or against Me"—there is no such thing as being neutral!

John 17:3 (NKJV)

³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

We are living in a very pluralistic society today where people have embraced many different gods and believe in many different roads that will get them to heaven (if they even believe in a place called heaven). But when Jesus called Himself and His Father "the only true God"—it implied that He believed there are false gods in the world that people have embraced:

1 John 5:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

John 1:1-4 (NKJV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him [alone!] was life....

Acts 4:12 (NKJV)

¹² Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

REFLECTION: What is the danger in having a neutral relationship with Jesus?

John 17:4 (NKJV)

⁴ I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

- What did Jesus mean by this statement?
- In what way did He glorify His Father on the earth? And just what was the work the Father had given Him to do?

The work Jesus came to fulfill on earth was twofold:

- 1. To show this world (primarily the Jewish people) what God was really like**
- 2. To die on Calvary's Cross to redeem us back to God by paying our debt**

The first is embodied in the statement - **"I have glorified You on the earth."**

God's *glory* involves or encompasses—His intrinsic, eternal attributes—the qualities that are only found in His divine nature. These would involve things like—the love of God, the mercy of God, and the grace of God.

So through Jesus' life and death and resurrection—these and other attributes of God's were put on display for the world to see—things like God's power (to defeat His enemies), His justice, holiness, righteousness, judgment (against sin), goodness, wisdom etc.

This allowed God to be glorified and the world got to see what He was really like!

REFLECTION: How did Jesus glorify His Father?

John 14:7-9 (NLT2)

⁷ If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!" ⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹ Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you?"

If you were to ask the average church goer—*"Why did Jesus come to the earth?"*

Upon hearing that question, most people would immediately respond—“To die on Calvary’s Cross and save us from our sins.”—and of course that is absolutely true! But that isn’t the only reason Jesus came to the earth—He came to show people (especially the Jewish people) what God was really like—

1 John 1:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ That which was from the beginning...the Word of life-- ² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us--

The word **manifested** comes from a Greek word that means—“to cause to become visible, to make appear, to cause to be seen.”

It reminds us of what Paul said about Jesus in Colossians 1:15, “He is the image of the invisible God”.

The Greek word translated **image**, was used of an image made by *impression*—as when Caesar’s image was stamped on a coin.

Paul is telling us that God the Father “stamped” His image on human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ—this allowed man to see what God is like. God is Spirit and is therefore *invisible*—but through the incarnation the invisible God became a visible flesh and blood Man.

Remember, in our study of Revelation 1:5 we read of Jesus that He was—“**A faithful witness.**”

In a court of law, a **witness** testifies to what they have **seen**.

Jesus having been in heaven with the Father has obviously seen the Father—and then He came to earth and testified to the people of this world on behalf of His Father. In other words, Jesus came to earth, in part, to bear witness to the people of this fallen world (especially the Jewish people) what God is *really* like.

REFLECTION: How has God “stamped” the image of His Son on your life?

You see, the Jewish people had gotten a warped understanding and impression of God over the years—primarily because they had tried to relate to God thru the Law—which they kept breaking and therefore kept reaping the judgment of God upon themselves and the nation.

This caused them to believe that God was nothing but a ‘vengeful, wrathful, fire-breathing God’ that they were always terrified of—a God they had a hard time getting close to.

So, Jesus came to set the record straight!

This was the fulfillment of John 1:18—

John 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him* [made Him known].

John 1:18 (NLT2)

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God [i.e., ‘in all of His fulness and glory’]. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us.

Author Warren Wiersbe—

“God has revealed Himself in creation (Rom. 1:20), but creation alone could never tell us the story of God’s love. God has also revealed Himself much more fully in His Word, the Bible. But God’s final and most complete revelation is in His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, ‘He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father’ (John 14:9).”

So, Paul declared in Colossians 1:15, that Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” or in other words—He is the perfect manifestation of the Father in human form. Which means, if you want to know what God the Father is like—all you have to do is look at Jesus!

REFLECTION: How might you explain to someone eternal life in heaven or in hell is real?

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.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).