

# 185. The Gospel of John 17:22-26

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*With Jesus Behind The Veil-Part 19*

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In our studies in the Gospel of John, we find ourselves in Chapter 17 looking at the greatest prayer in the Bible, the prayer of Jesus to His Father—a series we have entitled, *“With Jesus Behind the Veil”* (because this is a ‘Holy of Holies’ prayer). Yet, let me say one more time—even though this prayer was directed to the Father—Jesus prayed it with His disciples standing there listening.

Why did He pray this very intimate prayer to His Father in their presence? So that they would know and understand what was most important to Him regarding their welfare and the Kingdom of God going forward.

The things that He wanted to be the focus of their prayers for one another after He returned to the Father, and they continued the work of the Kingdom in His absence.

This prayer is divided up into 3 main parts:

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

And today we want to finish looking at the third part of Jesus’ prayer—

**John 17:20 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> **“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word...”**

So here in this section, Jesus is praying for all of those who would believe in Him down through the centuries.

What was it that Jesus prayed for all those that would believe in Him starting with this prayer the night before the cross to the present day—and through the Church Age?

Well, Jesus’ final prayer for all of us can be stated in 3 words—theses 3 words relate to 3 of the great themes of the Christian life: **Unity, Glory, and Agape**.

## **A. Unity (verses 20-21)**

The idea is that Jesus’ disciples would walk in practical fellowship and oneness among themselves. That was the first thing on His heart that night which He lifted up to His Father—first in verse 11 and then again in verse 21:

**John 17:20–21a (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup> that they all may be one...

So here, Jesus is praying that the Father would keep His disciples in *unity*.

➤ *Why was the unity of His disciples (then and now) so on Jesus' heart and mind that night?*

Because He knew that unity among His disciples would be critical if they were going to be victorious over the devil and successful in going into the world and spreading the Gospel (the Great Commission).

So, unity among His disciples was something on Jesus' heart that night—a unity that would start with their unity with Jesus Himself:

**John 17:20–21 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup> **that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.**

First of all, as Jesus said in verse 21—the unity of Christians towards one another is one of the greatest witnessing tools that we have!

True spiritual unity is only in Jesus positionally (among those who are born-again and collectively members of His one Body). But practically speaking, unity will only be genuine, ongoing, and powerful if it is built on God's love (simple denominational unity in name only would only be empty sectarianism).

As Jesus said earlier that night in the upper room—unity rooted in the love of God would be incontrovertible evidence to the world that we belong to Him—

**John 13:34–35 (NKJV)**

<sup>34</sup> **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.** <sup>35</sup> **By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love [God's love—agape] for one another."**

Then Jesus goes on in verse 22 to make a somewhat cryptic statement—

**John 17:22 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> **And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one...**

Just what '**glory**' is Jesus talking about that the Father had given to Him and He was now passing on to His disciples—whatever it is, Jesus said it is the basis for our unity in Him?

**Ephesians 4:1–4a (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, <sup>2</sup> with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> *There is one body and one Spirit...*

**John 14:15–17 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> “If you love Me, keep My commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Okay, the Holy Spirit is the basis for our unity as disciples of Jesus—but again, what ‘**glory**’ is Jesus talking about that the Father had given to Him and He was now passing on to His disciples? As we stated when we first started looking at John 17—God’s glory consists in or is made up of His ‘*intrinsic, eternal attributes.*’

*God’s attributes basically make up Who He is—His nature...*

*His nature was instilled in us at the moment of salvation—  
When the Holy Spirit came to live inside us...*

Even as Peter said in 2 Peter 1:4 that as Christians, we have been made partakers of God’s divine nature through the indwelling Holy Spirit. So, when Jesus says—

**John 17:22 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> **And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one...**

He is referring to the unity and oneness of Himself with His Church—He being the *Head* and we being His *Body*—connected to Jesus and one another through the Holy Spirit. Since we are one with Him through the indwelling Holy Spirit—we have access to God’s attributes which, when we walk in them (live a Spirit-filled life)—we bring glory to God by showing the world what He is truly like.

This is exactly what Jesus meant when He started His prayer to the Father—

**John 17:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> **I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.**

This goes along with what Jesus prayed in verse 10 with regard to His disciples—

**John 17:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> **And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.**

But listen, not only does Jesus want His disciples to *bring* Him glory—He wants us to *long* for glory!

Which brings us to the second thing Jesus prayed for all His disciples down through history—

**B. Glory (verses 22-24)**

The idea here is that His disciples would keep their eyes on and long for the glory of heaven—

**John 17:22–24 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> **And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: <sup>23</sup> I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. <sup>24</sup> “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me...**

**A longing for heaven (future glory) was something Jesus always had in His heart—  
but it was something He wanted His disciples to always have in their hearts as well.**

The way the Lord expressed this in His prayer was to pray that as He (Jesus) longed to be back in heaven with the Father (John 14:28)—so would Jesus' disciples long to be in heaven with Him and the Father as well. Of course, Jesus expressed this because when people love one another and have to be separated for a time—they should long for the day when they will see each other again and are reunited with one another once more.

Jesus was about to go away (back to heaven and the Father) and He would long for the day we (His Bride) would be reunited with Him in heaven—and He wanted us to desire with all of our hearts to see Him face to face where we would never be separated from Him ever again (the Rapture).

But on a practical level, He knew that without a passion for heaven—they could never fulfill the Great Commission here on earth. In other words, our success in the Christian life will be directly proportionate to how much we love the Lord and His coming Kingdom as opposed to how much we love the world.

**1 John 2:15–17 (NLT)**

<sup>15</sup> Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. <sup>16</sup> For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. <sup>17</sup> And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

**Matthew 6:19–21 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

One pastor said with regard to this—

*"I once visited an isolated eastern city in the former Soviet Union, where I met with fifteen hundred impoverished Christians. They were the descendants of exiles, and they and their ancestors had suffered terribly under Soviet oppression for three quarters of a century. Their poverty was so severe that they had to work hard every day just to put food on the table. The subject that was most on their hearts was their future in the glory of heaven. I had the privilege of teaching them about that from Scripture for several hours, and many were so overcome that they wept with joy.*

*Their response was strikingly different from that of many Christians in the West, who have things so good that they do not know what it is to long for heaven. As a result, they live as if going to heaven would be an unwelcome intrusion into their busy schedules—an interruption of their career goals, or vacation plans. They do not want to see heaven until they have enjoyed all the pleasures the world has to offer. When they have seen it all and done it all, or when age or sickness hinder their ability to enjoy those pleasures, then they will be ready for heaven...*

*When the church loses its focus on heaven, it becomes self-indulgent and self-centered, materialistic and worldly, spiritually weak and lethargic. The pleasures and comforts of this present world consume too much of its time and energy. Believers forget that this world is not their true home, that they are "aliens and strangers" (1 Peter 2:11; cf. Heb. 11:13) here, that their "citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20), and that "here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come" (Heb. 13:14). The church is increasingly in danger not of being so heavenly minded that it is no earthly good, but rather of being so earthly minded that it is no heavenly good.*

*A worldly-minded church is the result of a disobedient church. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded His followers,*

*“Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:20–21). “Therefore, if you have been raised up with Christ,” Paul wrote, “keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears (speaking of the Rapture), then you also will appear with Him in glory.” (Col. 3:1-4).*

Paul the Apostle tells us that living our lives focusing on the eternal and not on the temporal is the secret to dealing with persecution and tribulation here on earth—

#### **2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, <sup>18</sup> while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

The Church of Jesus Christ has begun to enter into the apostasy the Bible warns us would characterize the last days.

#### **2 Timothy 4:1–5 (NLT)**

<sup>1</sup> I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom: <sup>2</sup> Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. <sup>3</sup> For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will reject the truth and chase after myths. <sup>5</sup> But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don’t be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.

This apostasy will reach its zenith during the Tribulation Period under the leadership of the Antichrist and False Prophet—

#### **2 Thessalonians 2:1–4 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, <sup>2</sup> not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God...

This worship of the Antichrist will eventually lead to the slaughter of millions of God’s true saints by the Antichrist and his followers during the Tribulation Period. So, on the night before His crucifixion Jesus prays first of all for all of us that we would have **unity** with each other—a unity based on God’s truth:

#### **John 17:17–19 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

Secondly, the Lord Jesus prayed that the **glory** of heaven would fill our hearts and motivate our lives—not the glory of earth or anything it has to offer.

### C. Agape (verses 24b-26)

Of course, the idea here is that God's love would always be in them and flowing through them:

#### **John 17:24–26 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; **for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.** <sup>25</sup> **O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.** <sup>26</sup> **And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.**"

*The prayer concludes with the great secret of Christian living  
—Jesus and His love indwelling the believer.*

This was a theme He had especially expressed to these men the night before His crucifixion—in John 13:34-35 and also in Chapter 15:

#### **John 15:9-14, 17 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full. <sup>12</sup> This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are My friends if you do whatever I command you...<sup>17</sup> These things I command you, that you love one another.

As we have already said in our series "*The Vine and the Branches*" (John 15:1-8), the whole goal of the Christian life is to bear fruit for the glory of God.

When we think of spiritual fruit, we automatically think of the "*Fruit of the Holy Spirit*" that Paul listed in Galatians 5 verses 22 and 23—the first one on the list being **love**. In fact, the word "fruit" is singular, causing some to believe that Paul only had in mind "**love**" as the fruit of the Spirit—and the others ('joy, peace, longsuffering...') being the 'fruits' or the by-products of God's love in a Christian's life.

In an ultimate sense this "*fruit*" is simply the life of Christ being produced in a Christian (verses 1-8).

As we have already said, loving people as God commands with His agape love is *impossible* for us—it is beyond our ability because it's a supernatural, divine love! This is not a love one can *generate* or manufacture through hard work and raw determination.

It is not a love that can be produced in the fallen heart of men—in other words, it is not in me to love like this—God's love has to be *given* to us.

#### **Romans 5:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

It is through our abiding in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through us that this kind of love can become a reality in our lives to touch others around us—

**John 15:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.** [see our study on this subject in John 15]

Abiding in Jesus is the key to everything He prayed for His disciples on the night before the cross.

In fact, it is the key to everything God wants for us in the Christian life in the way of bearing the Fruit of the Holy Spirit and fulfilling the work He has called us to here on earth.

All made possible by the Cross which we will begin to look at in detail next time!

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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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