

JOHN 17:20-26
JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 17 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

Over the last few weeks, in our study of John chapter 17, we have been looking at the prayer of Jesus to God the Father on the night before He was crucified.

And keep in mind that this is not the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, but this prayer was before He arrived there, and it is a prayer that all His men heard.

Now that may seem kind of strange, Jesus praying so His men could hear what He was praying for. Why would He do that?

I think the main reason is that they needed to hear and understand what was important to Jesus. And what was important to Him were His men and the work that they were to do in bringing the Gospel message forward.

Not only that but I also think it was to help them to focus on what needed to be prayed for when He was gone. That they should be praying for one another and to continue on in the work that Jesus had started.

And I do understand that many feel that the prayer in Matthew 6 is something that many consider the Lord's prayer. I don't think so.

Why do I feel that way?

Because it is a pattern for prayer and not something that we are to pray over and over again. Notice how it all starts out in Matthew 6:9, "**In this manner, therefore, pray . . .**"

And you can dig into our Matthew study and look at what prayer is all about.

But here Jesus is praying specifically for three groups of people.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF!

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES!

And this morning we are going to look at the last one – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS!***

In other words, Jesus was looking down the road, throughout church history, to you and me and He is praying for all of us. That is amazing to me. His love for us is incredible!

And it is interesting what He is praying for. Think about all the things that Jesus could be praying about for us. I am sure we would come up with a good size list.

But the focus of this prayer is – ***UNITY!***

I guess Jesus knew what a huge issue with believers this would be and thus, His prayer is needed today in the church!

Of this section, Warren Wiersbe wrote,

Here our Lord focuses our attention on the future. He begins to pray for us who live today, for the whole church throughout all ages.

He has already prayed about security and sanctity, now the burden of His prayer is unity.

He is concerned that His people experience a spiritual unity that is like the oneness of the Father and the Son. Christians may belong to different fellowships, but they all belong to the Lord and to each other.

The disciples had often exhibited a spirit of selfishness, competition, and disunity; and this must have broken the Saviour's heart.

I wonder how He feels when He sees the condition of the church today!

The Puritan preacher Thomas Brooks wrote: *“Discord and division become no Christian. For wolves to worry the lambs is no wonder, but for one lamb to worry another, this is unnatural and monstrous.”*

What is the basis for true Christian unity?

The person and work of Jesus Christ and His glory (John 17:2-5).

He has already given His glory to us, and He promises that we will further experience that glory when we get to heaven! All true believers have God’s glory within, no matter what they may look like on the outside.

Christian harmony is not based on the externals of the flesh but the internals and eternal of the Spirit in the inner person. We must look beyond the elements of our first birth - race, color, abilities, etc. - and build our fellowship on the essentials of our new birth.

We already possess His glory within (John 11:22, and note Rom 8:29), and one day we shall behold His glory in heaven (John 17:24).

As we grow in the Lord, the glory within begins to grow and to reveal itself in what we say and do and the way we say and do it.

People do not see us and glorify us; they see the Lord and glorify Him (Matt 5:16; 1 Cor 6:19-20).

One of the things that most impresses the world is the way Christians love each other and live together in harmony. It is this witness that our Lord wants in the world “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 17:21).

The lost world cannot see God, but they can see Christians; and what they see in us is what they will believe about God. If they see love and unity, they will believe that God is love.

If they see hatred and division, they will reject the message of the Gospel.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT*, pp. 296-297

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

PRAYER FOR FUTURE BELIEVERS – JOHN 17:20

PRAYER FOR UNITY – JOHN 17:21

WHAT DOES THIS GLORY LOOK LIKE – JOHN 17:22

A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE – JOHN 17:23-24

THE LOVE OF GOD IN US – JOHN 17:25-26

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 17, beginning in verse 20 and let's see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study His Word and we look at this prayer of Jesus as – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS!***

JOHN 17

VERSE 20

Notice that Jesus did not just pray for Himself!

Also, Jesus did not just pray for His disciples who were with Him that night!

Jesus now turns His attention towards a different group of people. Now you may be wondering where these people came from, and we don't have to guess.

Jesus said, “**. . . those who will believe in Me through their word.**” John 17:20.

In other words, Jesus is praying for people who come to saving faith as His men share the Word of God with them. Yes, they did not start out well, but once they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, on the Day of Pentecost when the church got its start, we see Peter with a boldness that He did not have before, share about Jesus and some three thousand people got saved that day!

But Jesus was not just speaking about the days of His disciples. No, He was speaking about the future and all those who would be saved down through church history, including you and me!

I love that the Lord is praying for me, don't you!

It is as Morgan put it. He wrote, “*He prayed for them. He prays for us. He knew His intercession for them would prevail. He knows His intercession for us will prevail. Then let us rest in Him, with the rest of loving obedience and of surest confidence.*”

When you look at the disciples of Jesus and the early church, you can understand why they needed prayer, right!

But when it comes to us today, we are doing good. Why would we need Jesus to pray for us? In fact, as we will see, His specific prayer is for unity. We don't have to worry about that today, do we?

I mean, let's face it, we all get along, don't we?

Well, not exactly and we do need this prayer of Jesus and we not only need to hear it but apply it to our lives.

Do you know why there is a problem with unity within the church today?

It is something that has gone on since sin entered the world. The problem is – *US!*

Now don't be offended by that statement, it is true. Think about it, why can't we get along? Because this person said this or did that or whatever and the issue is a heart issue!

Let me give you this story to show you what I mean, that the problem is – *US!*

There was this man who was stranded on an island.

And years and years went by, and he was not rescued, he didn't even see a boat pass by.

Finally, after years of being alone, he was located, and some people came ashore to rescue him.

Again, he had been alone on this island for years and thus, before they took him off the island, he wanted to show them around.

He took them to his hut and said, ***“This is the home I built with my own two hands.”***

It was very impressive to say the least.

He moved on and he then showed them another building, and he said, ***“This is the church I built with my own two hands.”***

Again, another impressive building since he had no tools except the ones he made by hand.

As they were talking someone in the group said, ***“Hey, what's that building over there?”***

The man replied, ***“That's where I used to go to church.”***

Funny story but so true. The problem was not the other people who went to that church, since he was alone on that island, and no one was with him. The problem was the man and that sin nature that is in all of us. And because of that, it is hard to get along!

And I do understand we can have all kinds of reasons for not being in unity with other believers, but when we finish up this study this morning, I pray that you will see that those issues you have are your issues and when you hear what Jesus is saying, they should melt away!

Now I also understand that for some, unity is a dirty word. They don't like it; they think it is ecumenical in nature and they avoid it at all costs.

Early on in the ministry I had an elder and his wife mad at me because we sang a worship song called – ***LET THE WALLS FALL DOWN!***

Why did they reject this song and get mad at me for allowing it in the church?

Because, as they put it, "***It was ecumenical!***"

Listen to the lyrics and then I will expound on it. The song goes like this,

Let the walls fall down
 Let the walls fall down
 Let the walls fall down
 By His love, let the walls fall down

One by one, we're drawn together
 One by one, to Jesus' side
 One in Him, we'll live forever
 Strangers He has reconciled

Let the walls fall down
 Let the walls fall down
 Let the walls fall down
 By His love Let the walls fall down

In His love, no walls between us
 In His love a common ground
 Kneeling at the cross of Jesus
 All our pride comes tumbling down

Let the walls fall down
 Let the walls fall down
 Let the walls fall down
 By His blood let the walls fall down

- Maranatha Music – Let the Walls Fall Down

This was not an ecumenical song, not at all. And I tried to explain to them that this was not an ecumenical song, but they refused to listen. Even when I shared what the Scriptures have to say regarding these walls of division coming down, they refused to accept that!

What did I share with them. I shared with them what Paul said in Ephesians chapter 2. Listen to what Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:14-18 as Paul is speaking how Jews and Gentiles are united in Christ. He wrote, **“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”**

Again, there was a tremendous division between Jews and Gentiles and Paul is saying that Jesus has broken down those walls of division. What does that mean?

When you look at the courtyards that led up to the Temple you will see how this played out and the point that Paul was making here.

And we are going from the Temple moving outward and looking at these courtyards.

First there was the *Court of the Priests*, which actually contained the Temple building itself, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, and only the priests were allowed in this section.

This is where they would offer sacrifices to God on the brass altar and wash in one of the Lavers (wash basins) before entering into the Holy Place of the Temple to burn incense to God on the golden altar of incense which stood in front of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

Again, keep in mind we are moving outward from the Temple proper.

Next came the *Court of the Israelites*. You would enter this court through the gate called Nicanor's Gate, a great gate of Corinthian bronze which needed twenty men to open and shut it.

It was here, in this court, that the Jewish men assembled for the Temple services.

After that came the *Court of the Women* and to enter into this court you entered by the Shushan Gate of the Temple, into which any Jew could enter but which was called the Court of the Women because it was as far as a Jewish woman could go.

Keep in mind that these courtyards were all on the same level.

What I mean by that is yes, there were great differences between them, but they were not as great as the monumental division that came next.

You see, from the Court of the Women you descended five steps to a level area in which there was erected a five-foot stone barricade that went around the entire Temple enclosure.

Then, after another level space, there were fourteen more steps that descended to the **Court of the Gentiles** also known as the **Outer Court**.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the wall dividing Jews from Gentiles was marked at intervals by stone inscriptions stating that no foreigner (Gentile) was permitted to go any farther.

You see, the Gentiles were outside the covenants of God and were seen as far away from God and below the Jews (the Court of the Gentiles being on the lowest level).

And the Gentiles knew the Jews did not accept them unless they became a Jew, a proselyte.

In fact, in 1871 archaeologists discovered an inscription that was located on the wall separating the court of the Gentiles from the other courts in the Temple that Herod built.

This is what the sign said, “*No Gentile may enter within the barricade which surrounded the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.*”

That wall was a visible reminder of the separation that existed between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews, as the covenant people of God were closest to Him. Gentiles, the farthest away!

Thus, Paul is saying that the wall of division was taken down by Christ and that is what that song was all about. Not ecumenical but Biblical!

So we see here that Jesus – ***PRAYS FOR FUTURE BELIEVERS!***

And as we read on, we will focus on this – ***PRAYER FOR UNITY!***

VERSE 21

Please don't misunderstand what Jesus is praying for here when He prays for our unity!

You see, the unity Jesus is speaking of is not ecumenical; just believe whatever you want, accepting all things.

This unity is based on the truth and Jesus just got done telling us that His Word is truth.

Thus, as the Scriptures teach, Jesus is the One who unites us all together into the family of God and without Him there is no unity!

And here is the key to all of this, as one pastor wrote, *“Despite their outward denominational differences, all true Christians are spiritually and positionally united in the Body of Christ by regeneration in their belief that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone. Their commitment to the absolute authority of Scripture provides them with practical unity with one another here on earth and in the local church. All those who savingly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ ‘are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another’ (Romans 12:5).”*

Now why are there so many different beliefs in many Christian churches? Doesn't that prove that there is disunity?

Here's the thing. We can differ on non-essential doctrine and still be in unity with each other. Foundational doctrine can't be ignored, like Jesus is Almighty God, He alone saves us from our sins with His blood sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, He rose from the dead and so on.

We can't compromise or ignore those foundational doctrines!

Let me give you this example of two Christian men who had some non-essential differences.

George Whitefield would speak, and thirty thousand people would regularly attend his open-air meetings. So anointed and eloquent was he, history records many orators and actors would come just to watch him.

John Wesley, a contemporary of Whitefield's, was also preaching to multitudes.

Yet so diverse were the views of these two men on certain doctrines, they took out advertisements in the newspapers explaining why they believed what they did, and why the other was amiss.

People thought these men hated each other, until one reporter asked Whitefield, ***“Tell me, Mr. Whitefield, do you expect to see John Wesley in heaven?”***

“No,” answered Whitefield. ***“He’s going to be so close to the throne, and I’m going to be so far back, I’ll never see him.”***

You see, non-essential doctrines they were apart on but there was still that unity found, unity that was founded in love!

What the church has done today is they have put aside doctrine and are embracing this idea of unity!

Look at the number of Protestant churches that are embracing Roman Catholicism and saying that they are our brothers and sisters in Christ!

They are not!

How can I say that?

Because they believe in a different Jesus.

What do I mean by that?

They believe in a Jesus who is still on the cross. A Jesus who did not pay in full the penalty for their sins!

They believe in a different Gospel. It is a Gospel that speaks of needing Jesus but then you must do good works to get to heaven, fulfill the sacraments, and even then, you won’t make it, you must go to Purgatory to atone for your sins because Jesus did not pay for all our sins, or so they say!

There is no unity apart from truth and yet, the compromises that are being made today are foolishness!

That is not what Jesus was praying for!

Also, the church is in disunity over things that are not important, like I have said. And in the end, it is a pride issue.

Now is this unity important?

Some might not think so, but it is for Jesus tells us that it is this unity that will cause people to believe.

It is the disunity, the fighting over silly things that causes the world to shake their heads and walk away in unbelief and how it must grieve God!

You may have heard this before, but it does show what disunity causes. There was this issue of National Geographic that included a photograph of the fossil remains of two saber-tooth cats locked in combat.

To quote the article: ***“One had bitten deep into the leg bone of the other, a thrust that trapped both in a common fate. The cause of the death of the two cats is as clear as the causes of the extinction of their species are obvious.”***

When Christians fight each other, everybody loses. As Paul put it, ***“if you keep biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”*** (Galatians 5:15)

We need to be careful because our actions can turn people away from Jesus, from saving faith.

But look at all of us. We have so much that is not in common; how can we ever get along?

I believe that A. W. Tozer gives us the answer. He wrote,

Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow.

So one hundred worshipers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become “unity” conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strife for closer fellowship.

- A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, p. 97

Keep your eyes upon Jesus, do His will for your life and you will be in tune with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Do your own thing, then you will be out of tune and out of unity!

In these chapters of John, chapters 13-17, one main focus of the teaching of Jesus is love.

Remember what Jesus said in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

And again, there is the key, our unity with believers is linked to the way the church represents Jesus to the world!

Then why is this such a struggle?

Because the devil loves to divide and conquer.

That is why Paul wrote this in Ephesians 4:3, **“endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

This verse can be translated, ***“Being eager to maintain, or guard, the unity of the Spirit.”***

In other words, ***“we must constantly be endeavoring to maintain this unity.”***

It is a battle, but why?

Because it will constantly be under attack from the devil. Thus, if we want this victory, we must surrender to God and we must be aware of what the Devil wants to do and strive to keep that peace with the brethren!

Jesus prayed that our love, our unity with each other would just be like the unity that Jesus and God the Father have!

In saying that, ***“Lord, please help me because I am not even close to that kind of unity!”*** And guess what? Jesus is praying for this kind of unity in you and in me!

So this – ***PRAYER FOR UNITY*** is important!

But – ***WHAT DOES THIS GLORY LOOK LIKE*** or what does this unity look like as we live out our faith? We will look at that next.

VERSE 22

We all want this unity with God but notice what this is all based upon. It is based upon the glory of Christ.

Now what in the world does that mean?

I think it speaks of the attributes of God, that Jesus was humble, He had compassion towards people, He loved them.

And the only way that this can happen in our lives, is being saved of course, that is the first step. But then we must die to self, let go of our selfish life and surrender our lives to God to be used for His glory!

And I truly believe that ***LOVE*** is the key to everything we do. I am not talking about a worldly love but a Godly love, an unconditional love and that love can only come from God.

And it is out of that love we see all kinds of godly attributes flow.

Let me show you what I mean.

In Galatians 5:22-26 we are told, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”**

When you compare what Paul said here and what he said in Galatians 5:19-21 in regard to the works of the flesh, you will see that the works of the flesh are just that. They are selfish, it is all about you and you have no concern for others!

One is a walk in the Spirit as that love that God has given you is manifested in many different ways.

The other is a walk in the flesh or the works of the flesh and it is manifested in things that indulge our lives, that we will try to satisfy the flesh. And I will let you in on a little secret, the flesh will never be satisfied, it will keep wanting more and more!

That means we need to crucify the flesh and we need to take up our cross daily and follow Jesus if we want to manifest this glory in our lives!

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 1:5-7, **“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.”**

Morris put it like this, *“Just as His true glory was to follow the path of lowly service culminating in the cross, so for them the true glory lay in the path of lowly service wherever it might lead them.”*

Also, in II Corinthians 4:6 Paul tells us, **“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”**

God has put His glory in us, the knowledge of Him and thus, may we shine for Him as we live for Him!

We do have so many reasons why we can't live like God wants us to live. We would never put it that way, but if you are fighting with people, angry, if you can't love people, then that is exactly what you are doing. You are not living as God wants you to live and specifically what He is praying for all of us here in John chapter 17!

Let me share this with you to show you that it is possible to love and be in unity with other believers. We are told,

During World War II, Hitler commanded all religious groups to unite so that he could control them.

Among the Brethren assemblies, half complied and half refused.

Those who went along with the order had a much easier time.

Those who did not faced harsh persecution.

In almost every family of those who resisted, someone died in a concentration camp.

When the war was over, feelings of bitterness ran deep between the groups and there was much tension.

Finally they decided that the situation had to be healed.

Leaders from each group met at a quiet retreat.

For several days, each person spent time in prayer, examining his own heart in the light of Christ's commands.

Then they came together.

Francis Schaeffer, who told of the incident, asked a friend who was there, "*What did you do then?*"

"We were just one," he replied.

As they confessed their hostility and bitterness to God and yielded to His control, the Holy Spirit created a spirit of unity among them.

Love filled their hearts and dissolved their hatred.

When love prevails among believers, especially in times of strong disagreement, it presents to the world an indisputable mark of a true follower of Jesus Christ.

- Our Daily Bread, October 4, 1992

In the church today, in the body of Christ, we see disunity on a far less dramatic of a scale, not a life and death issue, but a pride issue, a personal conviction issue, and we can't get beyond it.

And yet, they were able to get beyond this anger, this hatred, this disunity and unite together as one in Christ.

The bottom line is this. Where there is a sense of God's glory, unity is so much easier. Lesser things that often divide us are set far in the background when there is a sense of God's glory at work.

What an example for us to follow as part of the body of Christ.

So we have seen – ***WHAT DOES GLORY LOOK LIKE!***

As we read on, we are going to take a look at – ***A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE!***

VERSES 23-24

Remember how John 17:22 ended, “**... that they may be one just as We are one.**”

And now Jesus goes on to repeat what He said basically in John 17:21, that He wants us to be like the Father and Him, that oneness, the singleness of heart!

And this is accomplished, as Jesus is praying for us, that we would “**... be made perfect ...**” John 17:23. In other words, that we be kept set apart, sanctified and in unity not only with God, but with other believers.

Is that your heart’s desire for it was on the heart of Jesus before He was crucified!

You see, this unity that exists between the Father and the Son is the unity that is to exist between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ and between other believers!

Let me illustrate it like this.

One day a professor demonstrated to his class the power of an electromagnet.

He placed 2 lbs. of nails on a table with the wires of an electromagnet under the table.

When he flipped the switch, the nails came together, and he was able to form the nails into various shapes as long as the current was on.

When the current was cut, the nails fell back into a pile. This reminds us that as long as the current of God, the Holy Spirit, runs through us, we have *unity* and God can form us into any shape He chooses for His purposes.

How true that is. We want unity but many times we get in the way, and we cut off that power supply of the Holy Spirit who is trying to work in us and we see the disunity that arises because of self, as I have said this morning.

If we are struggling in this area, we need to first restore that relationship with God.

That may have caught some of you off guard. Maybe it surprised you. Maybe it made you angry at me. I mean, ***“How can you say something like that Pastor Joe, that my relationship with God is not in line because I am in conflict with others?”***

Like it or not, isn't that what Jesus is praying about here in John 17 and we have already seen many times in John chapters 13 through 17?

Of course it is! And yet, we again have our reasons why we can't get along. I don't get it, but all I can do is share what Jesus is praying about here, what was heavy upon His heart and that the Holy Spirit would work on your heart and soften it and you restore that relationship with God so that you can restore that relationship with your fellow man.

Again, this may not be easy. It may not be popular for me to say these things, but hear me out. This is what Jesus is praying about so you can be mad at me but if you are, then you are really mad at Jesus. I am just a messenger, and I can't ignore these verses to make some people feel better.

And if you are feeling that nobody loves you, nobody cares for you, you are wrong. Jesus wants us to know that the Father loves us, or that God the Father **“... loved them as You have loved Me.”** John 17:23.

In other words, did you realize that God the Father loves you as much as He loves Jesus! Wow, what more can I say! I don't think we understand the depth of God's love for us!

Jesus also prayed for us that we would be with Him in glory. That means every time a believer dies and goes to be with the Lord, we see the Father answering this prayer of Jesus!

Many today are not longing for heaven, they are too tied into this world and yet, this was something that was on the heart of Jesus, to return to glory and for us, to go to glory!

Listen to what Jesus said in John 14:28, **“You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I.”**

He told His men that He was coming back for them. He longed to be in heaven with God the Father, and He wanted His men to feel the same way.

And here’s the thing. To put this on a practical level. If you don’t have a passion for heaven, how in the world are you going to fulfill the Great Commission here on earth?

You see, if you are not in love with the Lord and His coming Kingdom, how in the world are you going to share the Gospel message to people? The world has such a pull on you that you don’t see the importance of the coming Kingdom and you don’t see the importance of saving people out of this world!

John put it like this in I John 2:15-17, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

And when John is speaking of not loving the world, he is speaking about the false world system that is at war with God. The world is craving after physical pleasures apart from God and we have to understand that this world, this world system is passing away. It will not last forever.

And if you are consumed with this false world system, then you are at war with God!

Can we as Christians be at war with God?

I think we can. When we are doing things contrary to what God desires, we are at war with Him!

That is why Jesus prayed in John 17:17, “**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**”

As we are in the Word of God, as we allow the Word of God to be opened up to us by the Spirit of God, and we apply these things to our lives, our lives will be set apart for God to use!

Like Jesus warned us in Matthew 6:19-21, “**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**”

What is the focus of your life? Is it the Lord or the things of this world?

And please understand that I am not saying you can't enjoy yourself. What I am saying is that our enjoyment needs to be centered in the will of God and not the things of this world system that is in opposition to God.

Let me share these words with you from one pastor. He wrote,

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. . . .

[Now some of you may be wondering what is so wrong with that. Just enjoying this life and then, when you are older you can focus more of your attention on the Lord. Listen to what this pastor goes on to say.]

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. 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).

- Source Unknown

Once you have set your mind on the things above, then you can focus on the lost. You will not be concerned about the temporal things that are happening to you on this earth. Your focus will be different.

Isn't that what Paul said in II Corinthians 4:16-18, **“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 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.”**

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts these verses for us. It reads, **“Therefore we do not become discouraged (utterly spiritless, exhausted, and wearied out through fear). Though our outer man is [progressively] decaying and wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day after day. For our light, momentary affliction (this slight distress of the passing hour) is ever more and more abundantly preparing and producing and achieving for us an everlasting weight of glory [beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease!], Since we consider and look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are visible are temporal (brief and fleeting), but the things that are invisible are deathless and everlasting.”**

Jesus prayed that the glory of heaven would fill our hearts and motivate our lives. He didn't pray that the glory of this fallen world or anything it has to offer would fill our hearts or motivate our lives.

I hope you have seen here in John 17:23-24 – *A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE* that the Lord has painted for us as He desires us to have that intimate relationship with God the Father as He does, and that unity would then be manifested towards other believers!

As Jesus finishes up this prayer, we see Him pray for – *THE LOVE OF GOD IN US!*

VERSES 25-26

Isn't it interesting how the world sees God and thinks they know Him when they really don't.

All the unbiblical ideas, false doctrine they come up with and yet they don't know God.

But as we look at Jesus we see the Father, His love is manifested in us and through our lives! His truth is there for us in His Word.

One writer summed this up for us like this. He wrote,

That the love with which You loved Me may be in them: Jesus received love from God the Father, and this love relationship was the strength and sustenance of His life. Here, concluding His great prayer, Jesus prayed that the same love that was His strength and sustenance would fill His disciples (both near and far).

This speaks to the essential place of **love** in the Christian life and community. Jesus thought it so important that He specifically prayed for **love** when He might have prayed for many other things.

Take love from joy and you have only hedonism. [pleasure-seeking, self-indulgence]

Take love from holiness and you have self-righteousness.

Take love from truth and you have bitter orthodoxy.

Take love from mission and you have conquest.

Take love from unity and you have tyranny. [dictatorship]

- David Guzik

Make no mistake about it, without love, the agape love of God in our lives, we are not following the Lord but our own interests. And that worldly love will be what the people see, not the unconditional love of God, that agape love!

Paul tells us in Colossians 3:17 regarding what should come from our lives, “**And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**”

May we do that with joy in our hearts and love in our actions as our Lord and Savior has shown us! In other words – ***THE LOVE OF GOD IN US!***

And then we are told in John 18:1, **“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.”** That is where we will pick up next time.

Let me close with this to show you the importance of unity. We are told,

At a meeting of the American Psychological Association, Jack Lipton, a psychologist at Union College, and R. Scott Builione, a graduate student at Columbia University, presented their findings on how members of the various sections of 11 major symphony orchestras perceived each other.

The percussionists were viewed as insensitive, unintelligent, and hard-of-hearing, yet fun-loving.

String players were seen as arrogant, stuffy, and unathletic.

The orchestra members overwhelmingly chose “loud” as the primary adjective to describe the brass players.

Woodwind players seemed to be held in the highest esteem, described as quiet and meticulous, though a bit egotistical. Interesting findings, to say the least!

With such widely divergent personalities and perceptions, how could an orchestra ever come together to make such wonderful music?

The answer is simple: regardless of how those musicians view each other, they subordinate their feelings and biases to the leadership of the conductor. Under his guidance, they play beautiful music.

If you want to play beautiful music in your Christian walk, in your Christian life, then you must surrender your feelings, your biases to the leadership of our conductor, Jesus Christ! It is then and only then will there be this unity and the work of God will go forward! May we not forget this prayer of Jesus for us!