



Tim Pauley
PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358
304.767.8430
tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

The Real Lord's Prayer

John 17

"I'll be praying for you."

These are encouraging words to us when we hear them from friends and family in times of struggle and difficulty. If we believe that prayer makes a difference and that God hears and answers the prayers of His children, then it is great to know that people are taking our needs before the heavenly Father. There can be no more encouraging truth for us to know than that Jesus Christ himself prayed for us – and continues to pray for us to this day! This is the truth we will consider in a series of studies from John 17 as we study "The Real Lord's Prayer".

All of us are familiar with what we call "The Lord's Prayer", Jesus' model prayer given to His disciples in Matthew 6:9-13. This was an example of how to pray.

In John 17 we have recorded for us Jesus' actual prayer to His Father, uttered only a short time before His arrest and crucifixion. This is often called His "high priestly prayer", referring to the fact that He is praying for His disciples – interceding before the Father on their behalf. We will consider it as the "Real Lord's Prayer", as Jesus bares His heart to the Father shortly before He is to suffer and die for us.

This may be one the most amazing passages found in the Bible. It reveals to us much about the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. It spans the entire course of redemptive history – tracing God's plan in eternity past to send His Son to be the Savior and culminating in the cross. It lays out for us the pattern of Jesus' intercessory work on our behalf that carries on to today. Indeed,

"There is no voice which has ever been heard, neither in Heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime than the prayer offered up by the Son of God Himself."¹

This prayer comes at the end of Jesus' sharing with His disciples in the upper room at the Last Supper. In John 14-16 He is preparing them for the fact that He is going away. He shares with them great promises that will encourage them in the difficult days to come and that will sustain them in life and service. He promised them peace and joy. He promised them

power. He promised them fellowship. He promised them the Holy Spirit. He promised them trouble. In the end, He promised them ultimate victory and closed with the encouraging words, **"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world"** (John 16:33). At this point Jesus lifts up His eyes to heaven and prays for the Father to fulfill those promises He has made to His disciples – the most thrilling prayer prayed in all the Bible. It is uttered aloud before the disciples so they might take encouragement from His Words.

Jesus' prayer falls into three sections: His prayer for Himself (:1-5), His prayer for His disciples (:6-19), and His prayer for the church – for us! (:20-21). We can learn much and find great encouragement from studying these three aspects of this prayer. However, perhaps the greatest thing we can learn is from looking at Jesus' example as One who constantly, faithfully prayed.

Jesus' Example of Prayer

This was certainly not the first instance given us in the Bible of Jesus praying. We find that He prayed constantly throughout His life and ministry. At His baptism, while He was praying, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (Luke 3:21). When He began His public ministry, Jesus got up early in the morning, went to a secluded place, and prayed (Mark 1:35). As He prepared to select His disciples, Jesus went off to a mountain to pray, and spent the whole night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12). It was as Jesus was praying that He was transfigured before Peter, John, and James, giving them a glimpse of His future glorified body (Luke 9:29). And, of course, we are aware of His prayers in

the garden (Luke 22:39-46) and on the cross (Luke 23).

Certainly Jesus taught us how to pray. But more than that He gave us the perfect example of how and for what to pray. Most of us do not pray as much or as often as we should. We do not pray as fervently as we should. We do not pray how or for what we should.

JESUS DID!

What Can We Learn from Jesus' Prayer?

What can we learn from spending time in this passage, the "Real Lord's Prayer"?

We learn much about Christ and His relationship with God the Father. We get a closer glimpse of the unfathomable truths of the Trinity in this prayer from the Son to the Father. We are reminded what Jesus did when He left the glories of heaven to come to suffer and die for us. We are taken with how Jesus submitted Himself in perfect obedience to the Father's will. We have shared how we can grow in our zeal of love and service for the Lord by contemplating who He is and what He has done for us. Certainly there is no greater place to contemplate these than in this prayer.

We learn much about how to pray. Jesus personally demonstrates how and for what we should pray. We find great encouragement in Jesus' prayer for His

disciples and for us. We live in challenging and difficult times. Jesus promised that the world will hate us and we will face persecution. Yet His promises in John 14-16 and His prayer for God to fulfill those promises give us great encouragement. The fact that Jesus is ***STILL*** praying for us brings great peace and joy in troubling times. (Romans 8:31-34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24).

We see the importance of the cross. While the cross and Jesus death are not explicitly mentioned in this chapter, it is really the focal point of His prayer. This was the hour for which He had come (17:1). This was the act by which God would be ultimately glorified. This was the plan which had been made before the world was even created (17:5). God the Father sent God the Son to suffer and die for sinful people. At the cross God would be gloried as both His justice and His mercy were demonstrated. Jesus would rise again and receive the glory He so rightly deserved for His humility and obedience (Philippians 2:1-11). These are the truths so powerfully presented as we dig into this chapter.

Conclusion

Jesus prayed for us, and continues to pray for us to this day! Do we believe that God the Father will hear and answer the prayers of His Son? If so, we can find great comfort, peace, and joy in these words of the "The Real Lord's Prayer".

¹Philip Melancthon. A reformer in the 1500's and close associate of Martin Luther.

BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays, 12:00 Noon

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