

**SIMPLE STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES**  
**A PRAYER FOR GOD'S PEOPLE IN JOHN 17**  
**STUDENT'S STUDY GUIDE**



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## A PRAYER FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

### JOHN 17

#### Introduction

It was the night of the Last Passover. Supper had ended. Judas Iscariot had left the table to go out into the dark night to do the black beckoning of hell. When he was gone, Jesus began to speak. He had many things He wanted to say to His beloved disciples and He had a final prayer He wanted them to hear. Some have called it *The Lord's Last High Priestly Prayer*. Of this prayer, Martin Luther wrote, "*This truly, beyond measure, a warm and hearty prayer. He opens the depths of His heart, both in reference to us and to His Father, and He pours them all out. It sounds so honest, so simple; it is so deep, so rich, so wide, no one can fathom it.*"

The Scottish Reformer John Knox had this chapter read to him every day during his last illness and in the closing moments of life; the verses from this chapter brought comfort to him. What we have before us is a Prayer for the people of God. There is something very special and tender about the Lord Jesus Christ praying. The *Bible* tells us that Jesus was a man of prayer. Sometimes He arose a great while before dawn to pray. Sometimes He spent whole nights in prayer. And He taught His disciples to be men of prayer as well. The content of some of the prayers of Christ has been recorded as per John 17. We can listen afresh to Jesus as He opened His lips and said, "*Father, the hour is coming; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee.*"

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, **Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:**

17:1 *the hour is come.* The 'hour' referred to was the hour of death. Seven times in the gospels. Jesus referred to this special time. Unlike other men, Jesus entered into the world to die a violent death. He came to die in such a way as to spill His blood as atonement for sin, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. For Christ, the Cross was not only the object of His destiny but also the means of being glorified. Dr. William Barclay notes, "*It is one of the facts of history that again and again it was in death that great ones found their glory.* Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War once called him, '*the original gorilla.*' But in the hour of Lincoln's death, Edwin M. Stanton realized the greatness of the president and said, '*Now he belongs to the ages.*' Since the hour of Lincoln's death at the hands of a single assassin, he has found greater glory than he received in life. Despite the attempts of the Catholic Church to break her, Joan of Arc stood firm and in the end became a martyr for a great cause. Today, the 19-year-old peasant girl who heard voices from heaven and led French armies to victory is respected worldwide. Meeting death with dignity she achieved a measure of immortality in the minds of millions. Joan of Arch found glory in death. In the hour of the Cross, Jesus Christ found glory. He delivered His message of triumph shouting, "*It is finished.*"

During the days of World War I, there was a famous painting made of a workman in rural America who was stringing wires across the open prairies in order to advance communication. As the final connection was made the workman listened in on the line. The painting had a one-word caption, “*Through!*” That said it all.

Jesus cried, “*Telelesti! Through! Finished! Completed*” The work of redemption had been accomplished. The Lord gave His life that the message might get through that God is love. God does love. God will love all that repent and come to Him.

17: 1 *glorify Thee*. As the Lord was concerned that He be glorified so He was anxious to glorify the Father. The way to glorify the Father is to obey Him. A child brings honor to his parents by obedience. A soldier brings honor to his uniform and his country by obeying superiors, especially in time of war. Jesus brought honor to the Father by obeying Him even when that obedience meant death by crucifixion. The Father was glorified and in turn He glorified His Son by raising Christ from the dead. It is as if God pointed to the Cross and said, “*That is what men think of my Son.*” Then God pointed to the empty tomb and said, “*That is what I think of my Son.*”

**2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.**

17:2 The word for eternal is *aionis*. This word has as a main meaning: the quality of life. Simply to have duration or longevity of life is not enough. There are many people who exist for years but they are not happy for one reason or another: poor health, unhappy homes etc. Life is endured but it is without any quality.

**3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.**

17:3 *they might know Thee*. Jesus has promised the very life of God to His own. The Lord promised that the Creatures of time can possess eternal life of the everlasting Father and experience something of the splendor and the majesty, the joy and the peace and the holiness which characterizes the life of God. “*This is life eternal,*” said Jesus, “*that they might know thee, the only true God.*” Do we want to know God? In a general manner, the universal answer is, “*Yes*” for mankind is incurably religious. All over the world, there are countless souls that long to know God. J. I. Packer wrote a book many years ago called, *Knowing God*. Heathen people in the darkest corners of the globe want to know God. Cultured and educated people want to know God. The work by A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, remains very popular though it was written over thirty years ago. We must ask ourselves, “*Do we know God?*”

To know God was an important concept in the Old Testament. Such knowledge was wisdom. Only the fool would say in his heart there is no God. Wiser men sought after Him. Proverbs 3:18 declares that *“wisdom is the tree of life to those who lay hold of her.”* Habakkuk dreamed of a Golden Age in which *“the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas”* (Hab. 2:14).

To know God involves first, an element of intellectual comprehension. Through the Bible, God has told us what He is like as to His nature, His attributes, and His character. There are many facts to study about God as a person. The essence of His character may be meditated upon with great profit. For example, the Bible says that there is only one God.

When Father Abraham first perceived that, when the Holy Spirit illuminated his heart and mind to that fact, it was a revolutionary thought. Abraham came from a polytheistic society. The concept of there being only *one* true God required an element of intellectual consideration rooted in spiritual illumination. But once the evidence was considered and the truth was embraced, there came tremendous freedom. Now the one true God could be sought for the purpose of fellowship. Many a missionary has brought relief to certain cultures that embrace a horde of gods whom they do not know and cannot please—though they try desperately to appease them. New knowledge makes a difference in the world. Christians need to study and find out intellectually what the *Bible* has to say about God and what God has to say about Himself. When we do, we find wonderful things about the God of self-revelation.

- God is a spirit. John 4:24 *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* Though Christ is the embodiment of the godhead, bodily, God is spirit and is not to be thought of as an animal or some inanimate object.
- God is sovereign. Psalms 24:1 *The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.*
- God is a great Saviour from personal distress and from the pollution of sins. Exodus 15:2 *The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.*
- God is unsearchable. Job 5:8-9 *I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause: 9 Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvelous things without number:*
- God is full of tender mercy. Psalms 31:7 *I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;*
- God is forgiving. Psalms 32:1-2 *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*
- God is glorious. Psalms 8:9 *O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*

These are just some of the things we can know about God. But really knowing things about God is not totally satisfying. It is possible to become too academic and impersonal with God, even if His mercy and grace is acknowledged and accepted.

To know God involves something else. There must be a quality to a relationship that supersedes all the collectable facets of His essence and theological facts. There is a soul intimacy that cannot be appreciated by mere objective knowledge. To truly know God is to have a personal relationship with Him by faith. How is this possible? The answer is primarily through Jesus Christ. To look at Christ and to believe in Him is to know God, for in Christ is the physical expression of all that God is in essence.

- Christ is sovereign. He can make the winds to hush and the dead to live.
- Christ is a great Savior. *“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”*
- Christ is unsearchable. Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King, He is also the eternal Son.
- Christ is full of tender mercy. He will even touch the untouchable. He will touch the leper.
- Christ is forgiving. *“Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee”.*
- Christ is glorious. See him as the exalted Son in the Book of the Revelation enthroned on high.

It was in March of 1991 that my then twelve-year-old daughter Tara asked me a profound question when we were driving home from a hospital visit. She asked how a person can know if they are a Christian? How *can* we know if we know God? Five things will help answer that question on a personal level. Is Jesus loved? To make it personal, *“Do I love Jesus Christ?”* Having not yet seen the Lord, *“have I learned to love Him through the hearing of the Word and the testimony of the heart?”*

One of the great love stories of the soul of this century is that between the British author C.S. Lewis and the American woman he eventually married, Joy. Through a series of letters, this couple began to correspond with one another. When they finally met many months later, there was a soul love between them based upon the words they had shared with one another. Many of us who have read the *Bible* and have heard sermons about Christ have grown to love Him whom we have not yet seen. Is Christ believed?

To make it personal, *“Do you believe in Jesus? Do I believe Jesus when He says that before the world began He, as the eternal Son of God, had fellowship with the Father? Do I believe Christ when He says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one will ever come unto the Father except through me? Do I believe Jesus when He says All that the Father has given to me will come to me, and I will lose no one?”* Some people, when they hear the teachings of Christ are angry. The Jews of His day picked up stones because they did not believe His words. They thought He was a blasphemer for He said that He could forgive sins. *Do I believe the words of Jesus and rest my all in Him?*

Is there a love for what Christ loves? To make it personal, “*Do I love the Church? Do I love the Bible? Do I love biblical sermons?*” Christ does. The Bible teaches that Jesus loved the church and died for it. (Eph. 5:25) He also respected the Scriptures and studied them in the synagogue where He opened up their spiritual meaning. Those who have nothing to do with the Church nor the Bible nor gospel sermons, how can they say that the love of God dwells in them? Perhaps such souls are involved in a subtle form of self-deception. On this matter, the Scriptures are plain as per 1 John 2:19 *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* Do you love what Christ loves? Have you turned your back on hearing the *Word of God*? Have you forsaken personal *Bible* study? Do you attend worship services on a regular basis? Is there joy in the fellowship of the saints? If not, why not return to Christ?

Is there an inner witness of the heart that it has closed with Christ? To make it personal, have you heard Christ say, “*I am yours and you are mine?*” *Romans 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

Is there a difference in life? To make it personal, can you say, “*I am not the person I used to be?*” 2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Is God honored as Father? To make it personal, “*Do you know God as Father-God?*” The *Bible* says that Jesus, with eyes lifted to heaven addressed God as Father—and then He died. Jesus died for the very purpose of revealing the Father to men.

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

17: 5 *the glory which I had.* The eternal existence of the Son is one of the great mysteries and great revelations of the *Bible*. Jesus was like a soldier or a knight who had left the king’s court to perform a noble and dangerous deed. He had to fight the Old Dragon called Diabolos. He had to conquer the fear of death. Jesus had to brave the scorn of the Sadducees, the insults of the Pharisees, and the skepticism of the Scribes.

There were many battles for the Lord to engage in but He fought the good fight. He finished the course and He was able to return home with all of His foes defeated. When Jesus returned to His heavenly home, He was given a royal welcome. All the souls of the saints and all the host of heaven stood up to honor His return. Another way that God the Father honored His Son was to give Him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given to Him (17:2). How many souls the Father has decreed to give to the Son is unknown, but it is a vast multitude that no man can count. And to each soul Jesus has promised the grace of eternal life.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.



17:6 *I have manifested Thy name.* In the *Bible*, the term “*name*” is used in a special way. To refer to the name was to refer to the whole character of the person in as far as the person can be known. Psalm 9:10 says of God, “*Those who know Thy name put their trust in thee.*” The reference is not to a special title but the very character and nature of God. The Psalmist noted that, “*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God*” (*Psa. 20:7*). The Psalmist knows that he can trust God because he knows something of the power and the majesty of Almighty God. Isaiah envisioned a Golden Age whereby all men would know the name of God and thereby know fully what God is like. Isaiah 52:6 “*Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.*” In John 14:9 Jesus put it another way when He said, “*He who hath seen me has seen the Father.*”

Because of Jesus Christ all of the guesswork as to what God is like can cease.

- Men have wondered if God exists. He lives. He is the God who is there.
- Men have wondered if God is distinct and separate from His creation. During the time of religious confusion the Hindus of old decided that God was not distinct from, but was part of creation itself.

One of the great religions that Jesus Christ challenged with His simple declarations was that of Stoicism. Stoicism had been found 300 years before Christ by Zeno, a native of the city of Citium [modern Larnaka] in Cyprus. Zeno would stand in the “*stoa*” or colonnade at Athens and deliver his philosophy about life. The three key words of Zeno’s creed were materialism, monism, and mutation.

Zeno believed that everything in the universe—every moment of time, every thought of the mind—had some kind of bodily substance or material. He believed that everything could ultimately be referred to a single unifying principle (monism). And Zeno taught that everything is perpetually in process of changing and becoming something different from what it was before (mutation).

According to one professor, “*Many of the men who flocked into the Christian community during the second century had been educated in these doctrines from their youth.*” (Maxwell Staniforth) The teaching of Zeno would be very acceptable to the youth of today for his concepts are still pervasion reflected in the teaching of men like Carl Sagan who speaks of the Cosmos, eternal matter, and education (mutation). Jesus Christ declared that not only does God exist but also He is distinct from His creation. “*I leave the world,*” said Christ, “*and go to the Father.*”

If ever individuals are to fully appreciate God the Father, they must look closely at Jesus Christ. Dr. William Barclay notes, “*It is Jesus’ supreme claim that in Him men see the mind, the character, and the heart of God.*”

Not all men see the mind, the character, and the heart of God and the *Bible* explains why. People are born physically alive but spiritually dead.



The natural person is a soul without spiritual life, without spiritual sight, and without any genuine hope. Every impulse of the heart, every thought of the imagination, is away from God and is centered on self.

Society steps in to curb the natural tendency of the heart to be a god unto itself, lawless and accountable to no one. Sometimes, society does a pretty good job. Most of the time it fails. But what society cannot do, what the home, and the schools cannot do, what the Laws of the land cannot do for men and women and young people is to give them true spiritual life. Only the Almighty God can do that.

This truth does not stop individuals from trying to change. The bookstores are filled to overflowing with an endless array of self-improvement books. And yet, for all of the many writings, the honest heart will confess that something is still needed in the soul. The Bible calls this need regeneration or the New Birth. Jesus told Nicodemus, “*You must be born again.*”

Educated and uneducated people need to be born again. Good people as well as the dregs of society need to be born again. Those who enjoy religious privileges need to be born again.

One of the saddest stories in the entire *Bible* is that of the man who kissed the Hope of Heaven, literally, on his way to hell. His name—Judas Iscariot. Judas could have eaten of the Bread of Life, he could have drunk from the Well of Living Water, but instead Judas chose to merely kiss the Door of Heaven and depart to his own place. In the end, Judas was remorseful for the life he had lived and the deed he had done, but he remained unregenerate, unrepentant, and unresponsive to true discipleship.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

17: 6-8 *they have kept Thy Word.* These words indicate true discipleship, for in the prayer of Christ, while the sovereignty of God is declared, the responsibility of man is set forth. Observe several truths about discipleship.

- Discipleship involves an intellectual understanding concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ. According to the Lord, His disciples will understand three things. The awesome power and wisdom given to Christ has its ultimate source in God the Father. (John 17:7) No man ever spoke as Jesus spoke and no man every performed the miracles which He did. Christ had to come from God.
- The body of truth, Jesus taught, is to be received without reservation (John 17:8a). It was important for the disciples to believe these things, in particular about the essence of Christ, for in His person the fate of the world rest.

- Only Christ has been sent (John 17:8b).

Beside an intellectual belief and a heartfelt assent to the truth as Jesus taught it, discipleship issues forth in gospel obedience. (17:6b) Jesus said of His disciples, *“They have kept thy word.”* As long as an individual continues to do as they will, that person cannot be said to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. A true disciple is one who has accepted the mastery of the Master. A true disciple hears the Word and keeps it in principle and in practice.

The old Puritans warned their generation that as long as there is one area, one darling sin, one facet of the life that is not sanctified and dealt with by Christ, then the whole ship of salvation is in danger of sinking. The Rich Young Ruler was almost perfect, but Jesus said that he lacked one thing for he was covetous. Christ comes to demand that His disciples deal radically with sin in order to be proceeding in the process of being made perfectly in His image. Discipleship is based upon certain beliefs.

- Discipleship issues forth in gospel obedience.
- Discipleship is something that is determined by God.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

17:9-10 For those who know something of a longing to be like Christ, for those who know the shame of sin, and have received the grace of a loving Lord, there is this precious point, discipleship is something which is destined by God to be realized, for Jesus has prayed for His people. *“I pray for them,”* says our text. *“I pray not for the world, but for them.”* (John 17:9)

What does this mean? It means that Jesus draws a dramatic distinction between His own and all others. There is the world, and there is His Small Flock. There is the world, the large portion of mankind, and there is the Church, the called out Assembly of God according to the principle of grace. And the soul-searching question arises, *“Am I among those for whom Christ has prayed?”* Or, *“Am I one for whom Christ has not prayed, for my heart and all that I am belongs to the world?”* Are you a disciple of Christ?

It was Dr. Martyn-Lloyd Jones who observed that one of the greatest missionary fields for biblical evangelism is not the jungle tribes of Africa or the communist of China but the local church. People can be religious without being regenerated and righteous. Jesus Himself and the Apostles found fertile soil to proclaim redeeming grace in the synagogue or churches of their day and human nature has not changed. The fields are still white unto harvest in the pews and in the pulpits of this land.

The litmus test of true conversion, the litmus test of knowing genuine salvation, the litmus test of the confidence of being united to Christ is discipleship. Those who are given to Christ know His word and they keep it.

- There is a submission to the Lord's will.
- There is sweetness of His spirit in their lives.
- There is a longing to please Him in all things.

May the Lord see His prayer for His people realized in their lives.

11 **And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.**

17:11 *I am no more.* Jesus Christ was going away. He knew it, and the disciples knew it though they did not want to accept the reality of that concept. Jesus Christ was going away. Very soon the sun would rise over Palestine and Jesus would not be in the land. The disciples would sit down to supper. They would look at the place of honor but their Leader would not be at His familiar place. Jesus Christ was going away. In the mind of Christ, so near and so certain was His departure from the Earth, that He could speak as if it were an accomplished fact. *“And now I am no more in the world.”*

One day all of God's people will be able to say the same. One day, as it has been since Adam, Death will come, the icy fingers of the Grim Reaper will reach forth to claim the life. But if the heart is prepared, if the heart is right with God, there will be the ability to say with sadness mixed with anticipation *“And now I am no more in the world.”*

For Jesus, not to be in the world did not mean the cessation of life. That is what Satan and the sons of Satan would have men believe. Evolutionist and humanity unite with certain cults to teach that there is no life after death and that the end of creation is the grave. Because of Christ, the Christian community is persuaded of better things. *“I am no more in the world,” said Jesus, “I come unto thee Holy Father.”*

The Son came from the Father and the Son will return to the Father. Here is a great mystery that teaches there is another dimension of time and space that is yet to be experienced. There is a place called heaven. The *Word of God* has many truths to declare about heaven.

- Heaven is a better country. Hebrews 11:13-15 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

It is not hard to understand how heaven can be a better country than the countries of earth. As great and wonderful as America is when compared to other nations on earth, it pales into insignificance to the better country of eternal glory for in that country there is no bloodshed or violence.

Mothers do not butcher their babies through the partial birth abortion process and children do not carry guns to school to shoot their classmates. In the celestial city women walk without fear of being molested. There are no liars, nor thieves nor alcoholics. In heaven the voices of the innocent are heard to laugh and sing. Heaven is a far better country.

- Heaven is a place of rest. Hebrews 4:11 *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*
- Heaven is the dwelling place of God. Heaven is much more than the place where evil is absent and the saints find rest; heaven is the place where Almighty God dwells.
- Revelation 22:3 *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:* Now Jesus had already told the disciples why He had to leave Earth and return to heaven.

First, the Lord had to return to heaven to be honored for His labors. That the Lord was honored by the Father is declared in Matthew 28:18, *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”* On the day of Pentecost Peter spoke of the honor that the Father had bestowed upon the Son. Once Satan had offered Christ the kingdoms of this world, but the Lord refused the temptation and received not only the kingdom of this world, but authority over all heaven and earth as well. *Psalms 2:8 “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”* (cf. Acts 2:25-36)

Second, Jesus had to return to heaven in order to prepare a home for His own. John 14:2 *“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”* Someone has said that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Jesus has prepared for His own a place by entering heaven as a Representative and taking possession of it on behalf of others. A.W. Pink writes that *“God never has, and never will, take His people into a place unprepared for them. In Eden, God first ‘planted a garden’ and then placed Adam in it. It was the same with Israel when they entered Canaan.’ Deuteronomy 6:10-11 “And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, 11 And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;”* Such is the nature of grace. While we journey here on earth, Jesus is preparing for us a place in heaven. But He had to leave the world to go to the Holy Father.

17:11 *Holy Father.* By using the words *“Holy Father,”* the Lord indicates that the twofold request He has is ultimately a work of God’s holiness. The twofold request is for the preservation and unification of His disciples. The request for preservation is expressed in the plea *“Keep through thine own name those whom thou has given me.”* It is a blessed thought that the work of our final salvation ultimately rests upon the sustaining power of the Father.

And the prayer of Christ does not diminish the Divine decree of God whereby He ordains whatsoever shall come to pass. Jesus has already stated that no sheep of His would ever perish, and still He prays for the preservation of the sheep. The reason is simple enough. "*God's decrees do not render void the use of means!*" (A.W. Pink) Many of God's decrees are accomplished through the instrument of prayer. Prayer is the pipeline of the soul from earth to heaven. We must pray because Jesus prayed. And while He prayed for us, the petition of our Lord does not diminish human responsibility. The Bible says that only those who endure to the end shall be saved. The Bible commands the Christian to watch, to pray, to resist the Devil, and to flee from temptation.

These biblical imperatives come in order to enable the believer to be a mature disciple of Christ and yet ultimately, in the final analysis, the Holy Father must keep us.

- He must keep us from our intense inappropriate desires.
- He must keep us from our anger.
- He must keep us from our greed.
- He must keep us from foolish decisions.
- He must keep us humble lest our hearts grow proud.

The Father must keep us in all things and at all times or we shall perish! In times of sickness and in times of health, the Father must preserve us. In times of prosperity or poverty, He must keep us. In times of extreme temptation, the Father must keep us.

The Devil knows a thousand ways to sink the gospel ship of salvation. Satan knows how to snatch the good seed from fertile soil lest it take root and sprout. The Old Dragon is powerful to repulse the longings of the heart for holiness, freedom, and salvation. And yet, for all of Satan's cleverness, for all of his cunning wisdom to deceive and to damn souls, the Father can still keep the elect secure so that not one of them is lost. The prayer of Christ for the preservation of His people will be answered.

The second part of the Lord's petition was for the unity of the disciples. Christian unity is one of the major themes of the Word of God. The Lord's emphasis upon this topic is reflected not only in the special prayer He prayed but in the typology that is used for the Church. Seven figures are used of the Church to show her vital relationship to the Christ and the essential unity of her essence.

- The Shepherd and the sheep. John 10:11 *"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."*
- The Vine and the branches. John 15:5 *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."*

- The Cornerstone and the stones of the building. Ephesians 2:19-22 *“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”*
- The High Priest and the kingdom of priests. Hebrews 7:26 *“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;”* 1 Peter 2:9 *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:”*
- The Head and the Body with its many members. Ephesians 5:30 *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”* 1 Corinthians 12:27 *“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”*
- The New Creation. A number of passages could be cited to establish the biblical truth that there is a New Creation in the life of a believer. The Old Adam is put off and the New Man emerges. The believer experiences in the sight of God a co-crucifixion, co-death, and co-burial with Christ in order to experience resurrection power. Romans 6:2-4 *“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;”*
- The Bridegroom and the bride. 2 Corinthians 11:2 *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* John 3:29 *“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”*

In each of these seven typologies the essential unity between Christ and His people is expressed. Jesus wanted, and still wants, that same unity to exist among the saints. There is a unity that God's people must strive for. There is to be a unity of faith. Acts 4:32 *“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”* The Lord's desire for doctrinal unity finds itself in conflict within the church body because of specialization reflected in the various denominations and auxiliary ministries. Many ministries are established upon the principle of specialization on such topics as soul winning, separation from the world, Bible doctrine, speaking in tongues, or social action programs. The challenge for the church in this century is to find an essential basis of unity despite the fragmentation of specialization.

There is a way to meet the challenge to unity and that is by individuals rediscovering a personal love relationship with the Living Lord. When Christ is once more securely in our hearts then we will love what He loves and there will be peace among the people of God.

There is a unity of service. It is the will of the Lord that His people not only believe correctly but also work graciously with each other. Grace is shown not when things are going well, but when there is error, disruptive behavior, or an offense taken. In times of stress and tension, the Scripture must be present to guide the behavior of believers lest we destroy each other with words that fatally wound the essence of the soul.

Now, *“all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”* Jesus has prayed for His people. And His prayer will be honored as believers love Him and each other, all the while striving for essential unity, while supporting the doctrine and direction of the church.

**12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.**

17:12 *I kept them.* Jesus reminds the Father that while He was in the world, He kept His sheep through His sustaining power while depending always upon the essential glory of the Father. The Father had given to the Son many pearls of Great Price. The Father had given to the Son many valuable coins. The Father had entrusted to the Son specific sheep, each one known by name. *“And I have kept them,”* said Christ and *“none of them is lost.”*

- Though Thomas doubted, he would not be lost.
- Though Satan desired to have Peter to sift him as wheat, Peter would not be lost.
- Though Matthew was a tax collector and hated by many as a traitor, he would not be lost.

James and John, the *Sons of Thunder*, shall also be kept. Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, James the son of Alphaeus and Lebaeus whose surname was Thaddeus as well as Simon the Canaanite, all these have been kept by Christ so that none are lost—except one who is duly noted, Judas Iscariot. Judas is called the *Son of Perdition* *“for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve”* (John 6:71).

In recent years, secular movies and sacred *Bible* commentators have united in an attempt to reinterpret the character of Judas and present him as a tragic hero. According to one author the great sin of Judas was that he simply tried to force Jesus to establish His messianic kingdom along the expected lines by overthrowing the Roman government and exalting Israel among the nations of the Earth. According to this view, Judas knew that Jesus possessed unusual powers and abilities. Judas simply wanted the Lord to use His divine powers for the good of Israel. But the composite Biblical picture is different.



According to Scripture Judas was first and last a covetous man. He was intrinsically a thief. Every coin that came near Christ was watched over carefully by Judas for he, not Matthew, as one might expect, was the treasurer.

Second, Judas was a man of outward morality so much so that when Christ announced that He would be betrayed by one of the Twelve no one looked over at Judas with suspicion. There was no outward evidence that the Prince of Darkness held the heart of Judas captive so that to him rightly belonged the title *Son of Perdition*. To be called a *Son of Perdition* means several things.

First to be a *Son of Perdition* means that one is not a child or Son of God. Unlike the other disciples who were born again into the kingdom of God, Judas remained of his father the devil and the desires of his father he would do. It may very well be that Judas would not have classified himself as being outside the circle of faith, but he was.

- Did the other disciples work miracles in the name of Jesus? So did Judas. Did the other disciples preach the gospel of the kingdom? So did Judas.
- Did the other disciples fellowship with the Lord? So did Judas.
- At the Last Passover it was Judas who held the high place of honor being seated next to the heart of Jesus at His right hand.

For all the outward similarities there was a fundamental difference and that is Judas found an occasion to actively hurt the Person and work of Jesus Christ and bring it to an end. Whatever the sins of the other disciples may have been, they did not compare in magnitude or repercussion to the sin of Judas. As long as there was hope, the disciples believed in, defended, supported, and honored the Lord. Even Peter's act of denial was not meant to hurt Jesus but to protect himself—and a lesson is learned. Sooner or later all who are the children of hell, all who are of their Father the Devil, will find a way to hurt Christ, and if not Christ, then His disciples. As surely as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so will the sons and daughters of Satan mock Jesus Christ and all that is sacred and holy.

Second, to be the *Son of Perdition* means to abandon all hope of heaven. Jesus said that He saw Satan cast out of heaven. John, on the isle of Patmos saw in his vision Satan outraged because his time was short and so he made war with Christ. Satan knows that he has no home in heaven. Jesus stated plainly that hell was made for the Devil and his angels and by extension for all of mankind that will not repent and flee to Calvary. In Dante's *Inferno*, there is a sign hung over the door of hell which says, "*Abandon Hope all ye who Enter Here*".

Third, to be the *Son of Perdition* is to fulfill those Scriptures that warn of a certain judgment upon those who mock God. Mockery of all that is decent and holy will not be allowed forever. Judgment will fall and God will be glorified, either in His wrath or by the mercy He shows. The doctrine of eternal punishment is a harsh doctrine, which is why men hate it, deny it, and mock it but Jesus has spoken and the truth will not be changed. The Lord warned people of His generation as He preached in general, and He warned Judas in particular, that there is a place where the soul never dies and the flames of judgment are never quenched.

It is possible that Judas did not believe in the doctrine of eternal judgment, or it may be that he simply stopped caring if it were true or not. Sin does that to the heart. Sin makes the heart so callous that the tears of Jesus mean nothing. The agony of the Cross of Calvary holds no attraction. There came a moment in the life of Judas that he abandoned himself so completely to evil that Satan entered into his heart. *“Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve”* (Luke 22:3).

Every person faces such a moment of decision. There comes that critical hour of decision to choose between heaven and hell, eternal life or eternal death, self or the Savior. Christ shall keep those who, by the grace of God and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, choose life. Those who do not repent, and do not turn from sin, those who never weep tears of sorrow, those who do not know what it is to love righteousness and the Cross, shall be known as a child of perdition. It is imperative that people look inwardly from time to time and ask themselves some soul-searching questions with judgment day honesty.

- Do you know the Lord, or have you just heard of Him by the hearing of the ear?
- Have you ever experienced true conversion?
- Do you love self more than you love the Savior?

The prayer of Christ for His people is reassuring in that the Son will keep all the Father has given to Him for He is a good Shepherd. But those who have not been given to the Son, though they lived and existed in the sphere of His kingdom, are none of His, and they shall fall away. John Calvin noted that *“Peter fell from grace, but Judas had no grace to fall from.”* John Owen commented that *His election was to apostleship only, and it was from that he fell.* The last word of the *Bible* on the life of Judas is that he went to his own place (Acts 1:15-25) A. W. Tozer reminds us that every person has his own place. You have your own place to go to after life and I have mine. Where will it be?

**13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.**

17:13 *joy fulfilled.* The word “joy” is one of the great words of the Bible. Webster defines joy as *“the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires.”*

The focus of attention is upon this particular emotion being evoked or drawn out by something or someone. Religion can evoke this emotion of joy. Religious acts can create great moments of joy as the heart is focused upon the goodness and greatness of Almighty God. When the children of Israel were delivered from the land of Egypt, the Bible says that Moses and the people sang a song unto the Lord part of which declares, *“I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation.”*

When the Ark of the Covenant was recovered from the Philistines the Bible says that *“David and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord...with joy.”*

When the people of God made their way to Jerusalem to worship during special times of the year, strong emotions were evoked on their journey and the people sang together these words Psalms 48:1-2 *“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”*

Today, many of God’s people still find great joy being evoked as they prepare their hearts to worship. The week ends. There is Saturday and then comes the Lord’s Day. There is a strong spiritual pull toward the things of God. A time and place has been appointed for worship.

There will be singing and prayer. There will be the fellowship of the saints. And there will be a message from God’s Word. The Holy Book will be opened. Heaven might come down and glory fill the soul. One cannot help feeling sorrow for the non-religious person. There is no joy of anticipation and no joy of expectation of meeting with God and the Church of the blood bought Redeemed.

Beside joy being an emotion evoked by someone or something, joy is a state of happiness or bliss. When Jesus prayed for the people of God to have His joy, He was asking for that state of being which surpasses all understanding.

The Lord was asking for that stability of inner, quiet confidence. The joy of Christ can be known in the midst of personal abuse. Acts 13:49-52 *“And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. 50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.”*

The joy of Christ can be known during fiery trials of temptation. James 1:2-3 *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”*

The joy that Christ gives can be known in times of great personal sorrow, such as the death of a loved one. John 16:19-20 *“Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? 20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”* Of course, this type of joy that Christ gives is not natural. It is supernatural and is known only to the people of God. The joy that Jesus prayed for characterizes His special domain as per Romans 14:17 *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”*

The Lord was, and is, very concerned that His people know something of inner happiness. When He departed He sent the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter. Before He departed Jesus spoke many tender things for the expressed purpose that the joy of the disciples might be full. John 15:11 *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”* Therefore, as A.W. Pink notes, *“A miserable Christian...is a self contradiction. A joyless Christian is one who is out of communion with the Father; other objects have engaged his heart, and in consequence he walks not in the light of His countenance.* When a Christian finds himself without joy as a state of being, several things can be done, beginning with an examination of the heart, a confession of sin—fully, specifically, and honestly, and then a putting away of the same.

### **Doctrine of Joy**

1. A common Hebrew word for “joy” in the *Old Testament* is derived from a word meaning to “leap,” or “spin around” with pleasure. There is the idea of rejoicing.
2. The Greek word for joy speaks of gladness (Matt. 2:10; Luke 2:10; 1 Thess 2:20).
3. Joy is a positive emotion rooted in the delight of the mind over something that is considered or done.
  - There is *natural* joy. When moderate, it is called gladness; when raised suddenly to the highest degree it is exultation; when the desires are limited by possessions, it is contentment. Natural joy grows highest when a desired accomplishment brings satisfaction. Natural joy is expressed in a sense of triumph when the opposition is vanquished. When joy has so long possessed the mind that it has settled into part of one’s character or temperament it is called cheerfulness.
  - There is a *moral* joy, which is a self-approbation (self approval). Moral joy arises from the performance of a good deed. Moral joy brings inner peace or serenity to the conscience. When the action taken is honorable, a sense of joy rises high and might even be called, glory.
  - There is a *spiritual* joy called the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22) or “joy in the faith” (Phil 1:25).
4. Joy must have an object.
  - God brings joy. *Psalms 43:4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

- The Promises of the Word bring joy. *Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 1 Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:*
- The Gospel of Redeeming Grace brings joy. *Psalms 89:15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.*
- Remembering the Prosperity of Christ's Kingdom brings joy. *Acts 15:3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. Revelation 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Revelation 11:17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*
- Considering the Happiness of a Future State brings joy. *Psalms 16:9-11 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. Romans 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Romans 15:13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*
- 5. Spiritual joy is designed to be permanent. *John 16:22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*
- 6. Spiritual joy is unspeakable. *1 Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:*

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

17:114-15 *I have given them thy word.* Isaiah the prophet spoke of the Messiah as One who would hear the Word of God and give it to others. *“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.” (Isa. 50:4)* As the Messiah, Jesus said, *“I have given them thy word.”*

Unfortunately, the word that Jesus gave was not popular. It was not well received. The Pharisees rejected the word of Christ because it challenged their erroneous teachings. The Herodians rejected the word of Christ because they had political aspirations and Jesus said, "*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars and unto God the things that are Gods*" (Matt. 22:21). The people rejected the words of Christ because they had a concept of how the Messiah should look and act and Jesus did not act as expected. Without a firm foundation of faith the multitudes easily changed and cried out one day, "*Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!*" only to scream on another day, "*Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*" John 6:66 explains why the people turned on Jesus.

The *Bible* teaches that when Jesus stopped performing miracles and spoke the plain truth, individuals were offended. By rejecting the words of Jesus, the Jews were ultimately rejecting God Himself for Jesus says, "*I have given them thy word.*" Only a very few received Jesus. Out of all the hundreds of thousands of people who lived in Palestine at the time of Christ only a few believed and to them Jesus gave the word of God.

It is always dangerous to receive the word of God. It means in part to be hated by the world. The use of the word "*hate*" is not too mild. A simple examination of what happened to the Disciples of Christ reveal that Jesus was right, the world really did hate those who received the word (see *Foxes book of Martyrs*, Pp. 2-4)). The conflict between the saints and the world has not changed. If the church in America as a whole does not know the hatred of the world, perhaps it is because the church has not seriously confronted the world with sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. There are great social issues that the church has yet to address, such as abortion, the absence of prayer and religious instruction in schools, having a fundamental respect for the Lord's Day, the negative influence of inappropriate pictures and literature, the break up of the home and the abandonment of traditional moral values such as self-reliance, personal integrity, honor, trust, and faithfulness.

The world has not changed its opinion of Christ or the Christian community. Jesus said that the disciples were hated because "*they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.*" "*Once Christians were of the world, they followed its course, and were fully conformed to its policy, its principles, and its aims. But grace has delivered them from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4) so that they now have new affections, new interests, and a new Master*" (A. W. Pink).

Every Christian who takes the Word of God seriously believes that a holy life should be lived. But the question of just how to be holy remains for indwelling sin is real and powerful. This is a fact despite the attempt of some to deal with indwelling imperfections in a superficial way.

Embracing the doctrine of entire sanctification will help to minimize the presence of sin. Reducing the sinfulness of sin to human error only makes a mockery of evil. Accepting moral corruption as normal behavior and making no effort to be holy, serves to promote the presence of sin. So what is to be done? For despite all the various theories swirling around the concept of sin to mitigate its power and presence, the royal command is still, "*Be ye holy.*"

In reflecting on this matter of indwelling sin, it can be noted that God might have done several things to ensure a victorious Christian life.

- God the Father could have caused the saint to depart earth at the moment of salvation. But Jesus asked that this not happen. John 17:15 *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”*
- God the Father could have entirely sanctified the soul at the point of conversion—as one day He will.
- God could have removed all opportunities to do wrong. It was not really necessary for Eve to talk to the serpent (world). Bathsheba could have been led to have taken her shower elsewhere (flesh). Cain did not have to get angry at Able (devil).
- God could have made all forms of sin repulsive.

But the Lord God has not chosen to do these things as a rule. So the saint stays in the world, struggling to know something of personal sanctification, by facing and resisting the opportunities presented by the world, the flesh and the devil. Rather, and, surprisingly enough, God allows Christians to be tempted, even though sin is often succumbed to forming chains of habit that bind the soul to harmful habits. Once enslaved, souls cry out for freedom. Sometimes the cry for personal freedom can be heard on the lips of pagans such as Seneca.

Sometimes the cry for divine deliverance comes from the heart of a Christian who longs for more of the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying work knowing that those who walk in the Spirit shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). When the heart cries out for help, the Word of God gives hope of knowing something about a divine deliverance. However, before help arrives from on high, the heart must be convinced of three things.

- God is Good. The words of Satan in Genesis 3:4,5 may challenge the goodness of God. However, if a person doubts God’s goodness, they will not want to change. God will be viewed as Someone who wants to rob and not enrich the soul. Also, change will be feared lest God’s concrete demands are not ready to be met.
- The responsibility for any inappropriate behavior rests upon one’s self, regardless of childhood, society, or others. If we are responsible, we are in control of our choices which means change is possible.
- Deliverance from the power and pollution of indwelling sin is possible because of the promise of God (Gen. 3:15), the boundaries of evil (1 Cor. 10:13), the examples of conquest (Ex. 17:9-16), and the hope of the heart.

*Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”*

*1 Corinthians 10:13 “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”*



*Exodus 17:9-16 “And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. 10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. 14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. 15 And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi: 16 For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”*

*2 Peter 2:9 “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished:”*

In addition to these things, some other general thoughts can be noted.

- Sinful habits usually indicate unresolved conflicts in the soul.
- God is to be thanked for the temptations of life for they provide an opportunity to declare personal allegiance to Christ.

The way to arrest the progress of sin is in the soul.

- Begin by taking a through tour of the heart and listing the areas that need to be put to death: lust, greed, hatred, anger etc.
- Confess the problem honestly to God. *1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
- Realize that the ultimate goal is not personal victory over sin, but God Himself.
- Establish goals for the heart and mind to deal with that are both realistic and godly, all the while remembering the promises of the Word. *Matthew 26:41 “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* *Philippians 2:13 “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*
- Replace sinful habits with righteous ones.
- Be prepared for the discipline of spiritual warfare. *2 Corinthians 10:3-5 “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”*

- Watch out for feelings of utter helplessness or of smug superiority, for there is a cycle to addictions which consists of humiliation, self satisfaction, feelings of control and empowerment which goes to the point of making hidden provisions for sin, then back to failure and compromise.

*Jeremiah 8:4 “Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return?”*

*Psalms 145:14 “The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.”*

*Micah 7:8 “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.”*

*Psalms 37:23-24 “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.”*

- Find someone to trust for the purpose of accountability.
- Remember the power of intercessory prayer.

*Hebrews 2:18 “For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.”*

*Matthew 18:20 “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”*

- Learn well the truth that God’s salvation is found in Christ. *2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

The *Word of God* gives hope and instruction in righteousness. May the Holy Spirit grant the Church grace to live righteously and be wholly sanctified. Jesus has prayed that His disciples be kept from the Evil One. It is a mighty prayer for the people of God.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

17:16-26 Evangelist John R. Rice wrote one of the best books ever written on the subject of prayer in this generation. The title of the book, *Prayer: Asking and Receiving*. Dr. Rice argued extensively that a primary function of prayer is to ask of God the Father expecting an answer, “Yes”, “No”, or “Wait”. In His Highly Priestly prayer Jesus has been asking the Father for many things. The Lord has asked for the following.

- Jesus asked that He be glorified (John 17:1)
- Jesus asked that His disciples might be kept from ultimate ruin (John 17:11)
- Jesus asked that there be an essential unity within the fellowship of His body (John 17:11).
- Jesus asked that Christians experience and enjoy a measure of inner happiness (John 17:13).
- Jesus asked that believers be made holy and kept from evil and from the Evil One Himself (John 17:15)

As the prayer of Jesus unfolds, as His many requests are noted, it is instructive to the observer that there is expansiveness.

First, Jesus has prayed for Himself (John 17:1-8).

Second, He has prayed for the disciples (John 17:9-19). In John 17:20 the Lord looks into the distant future and prays for all who will ever come into the Christian faith. In particular the Lord desires that His people again enjoy unity in the family of God (John 17:21-26). By making this request the Lord’s own faith is revealed. Jesus never wavered from a firm belief that the Father was hearing His prayer or that men would *en masse* one day follow Him. Jesus knew that shortly He would die.

He knew that the disciples would falter, and in fear they would flee from Him. But Jesus also knew that the hour would come when the faith of the disciples would be re-affirmed and they would die for His sake. Jesus never lost faith in God the Father and He never lost His confidence in the men of His own choosing.

However, the Lord was well aware of the frailty of fallen flesh. Jesus knew that there are many things to divide and disrupt fellowship. Two thousand years of Church history testifies to the fact that not all Christians want to organize the local assembly in the same way, or have the ability to agree on all matters of faith and practice. As a result, there are assemblies that believe in a congregational form of government. Others believe in an Eldership rule. Many a verbal and emotional battle has been fought over the most biblical form of ecclesiastical government.

Then there is the matter of doctrine. Again, it is a general observation that not all believers embrace the same doctrines. Christians have the same Book but not the same belief, and so there are significant differences to the point that the best thing to do is to separate as Lot separated from Abraham (Gen. 13:1-12).

Perhaps the greatest historical illustration of the need for separation took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By that time the Roman Catholic Church had come to believe and teach that the soul is justified in the sight of God by faith plus good works. “*Not true!*” cried out Martin Luther. “*The just shall live by faith*” (Rom. 1:17). In October 1517, the very foundation of Christendom was shaken over the doctrine of justification. But it was only the beginning of discord. Once that issue had been settled in the minds of millions, other doctrinal concerns arose which continued to fragment and divide the Church. There was and is the issue of worship. Some people enjoy a sedate and predictable form of worship based on a historical and concrete style using creeds, liturgy, and symbols.

Others want spontaneity and freedom, and openness to worship with music and shouting and expressions of joy. Who is right? Who is wrong? Only one thing is certain and that is the end result, which is well noted by Dr. William Barclay. “*The cause of Christian unity at the present time, and indeed all through history, has been injured and hindered because men love their own creeds, their own ecclesiastical organization, their own ritual, more than they loved each other.*” Against a forever fragmented and divided Church, Christ prayed for unity in the family of God.

The only way that the Lord’s prayer will ever be answered is with a unity of personal relationships. Men and women must learn to love each other because they love Jesus Christ. When that occurs, then the Church will become an effective instrument to convince the world of the truth of Christianity and the place of Christ as the messenger of God (John 17:21).

Such a demonstration of love is not easy. Jesus had to ask for this divine love and the Church must ask for it as well. But then the next step also has to be taken and that is for the saints to strive for unity. The apostle Paul charged the Church, “*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph. 4:3). Prayer is to be made for unity and then unity is to be pursued as a holy passion by conscious efforts.

A conscious effort might include silencing a specific type of religious spirit associated in scripture with the Pharisees. A Christian must therefore guard the heart against a self-righteous spirit of condemnation. The first evidence of this disturbing spirit is a feeling of anger that someone else is not living up to expectations.

The temptation comes to rebuke or reprove a person regardless of context and then without graciousness of words or kindness of spirit. It is a blessed day when the world can watch a Christian community and realize that the people in the fellowship are making every visible effort to be at peace with one another by helping those in need, abstaining from unnecessary criticism, and speaking gracious words when possible.

To enjoy any essential unity in the family of God is to demonstrate the glory of Christ (John 17:22). Jesus said that He had given His disciples the glory that the Father had given to Him. But what did Jesus mean? Three things are involved.

First, the Cross was for Jesus the place of glory. To be sure, there was shame associated with the Cross, but there was also glory for in all the suffering there came forth eternal redemption. We look at the Cross today and cry, "*Glory!*" In like manner, the Christian's glory is the cross he must bear. Some Christians are asked to care for the hungry and the homeless. Their cross is the challenge of finding ways to help the most needy.

*"Love has a hem to her garment  
That reaches the very dust.  
It sweeps the streets and lanes,  
And because it can, it must."*

Others are asked to minister to the helpless and the most defenseless such as the unborn. There are Christians who are called upon to suffer imprisonment for their faith. Some believers will be given financial or physical hardships as a cross to bear. The believer's perspective is that it is an honor to suffer for Christ.

There was a time in Church history when knights rode forth to battle on behalf of their king. The harder the task the knight was given, the greater the potential glory. When it is hard to be a Christian, we must think of it as our moment of glory given to us by God. And when someone asks, "*Why do I have to suffer?*" respond by asking "*Why not you?*"

Second, the obedience of Christ to the will of God the Father was His glory. When Jesus was obedient in the act of baptism there came a voice from heaven saying, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Matt. 3:17). When Jesus preached the gospel despite the condemnation of the Pharisees and healed the sick, prophecy was fulfilled. Isaiah had written, "*Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles* (Isaiah 42:1)."

One reason why Jesus could lay down His life by means of crucifixion was because He had learned obedience in the ordinary ordeal of daily living—and that too was part of His glory (Hebrews 5:8). The Christian finds similar glory by seeking and performing the known will of God. Of course, sometimes, when Christians try to do the will of God there will be sadness and sorrow and distress of soul for the enemies of the cross are real (Philippians 3:8). But there will be great glory as well, for once more, the greater the act of obedience, the greater the glory.

- Glory came to Abraham when he obeyed the will of the Lord and left Ur of the Chaldees.
- Glory came to Moses when he arose and went to Pharaoh and said, “*Let my people go!*”
- When Daniel obeyed the will of God and continued to pray despite opposition, there was glory.
- The glory of the Cross is found in part in the great act of obedience that was necessary in order to get to it.

Third, the glory of Christ is reflected in His nearness to God. People who know Jesus were certain that no one could perform the miracles He did unless He was near to the heart of God. Now as Christ, even in His humanity, was near to the heart of God, so you and I can be near to God as well.

*“There is a place of quiet rest,  
Near to the heart of God,  
A place where all is peace and rest,  
Near to the heart of God.”*

If we as Christians are to know glory then we must suffer for righteousness sake, be obedient to the known will of the Lord, and stay near to the Father through prayer and meditation.

There is one final request that Jesus asked in this prayer for the people of God. The request is found in John 17:24. It is the will of Christ that His people share His future. When time is ended, when days on earth are completed, the Christian has a confidence that there is a better place, a far country, a heavenly home to go to. Most people do not think of eternity until they are forced into a confrontation with mortality through old age, a critical illness, or the untimely death of a friend or loved one. But by then it may be too late to respond in a positive manner. Ah, but for the Christian, there is a quiet confidence that the prayer of Christ for His own be answered. Those who love the Lord will go to be with Him who “*hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor*” (Ephesians 5:2). The conclusion of the prayer is that the love of God the Father and the love of God the Son might be manifested in the fellowship of the saints in order to demonstrate an essential unity in the family of God.

## **A PRAYER FOR GOD'S PEOPLE**

### **Student's Study Guide**

#### ***Review***

1. What did Jesus mean when He said, "*the hour is come*"?

***Answer.***

2. What is the best way to glorify the Father?

***Answer.***

3. Give a biblical definition of life eternal.

***Answer.***

4. List seven divine attributes with Scriptural references.

***Answer.***

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5. List six attributes of Christ.

*Answer.*

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6. How did the Son glorify the Father?

*Answer.*

7. How did the Father glorify the Son?

*Answer.*

8. List three characteristics of discipleship.

*Answer.*

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9. Describe the threefold litmus test for being converted.

*Answer.*

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10. State three facts about heaven.

*Answer.*

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11. State two reasons why Jesus had to return to heaven.

*Answer.*

12. From what must the Shepherd keep His sheep?

*Answer.*

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What are the analogies used in Scripture to describe the relationship between Christ and His church?

*Answer.*

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14. In relation to sin what could God have done?

*Answer.*

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15. How did glory come to Abraham, Moses, Daniel and Christ?

*Answer.*

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### ***Reflection***

1. Do you believe in the doctrine of perfection whereby a believer can be entirely sanctified in time? Why or why not?
2. Though the Lord has prayed for an essential unity among His people, why is there so much conflict in the local assembly?
3. There is a popular belief that during a time of great tribulation the Lord will remove the Church. Do you believe this will happen? Why or why not? How do you understand the words of Jesus in John 17:15 to have any bearing on your belief?

### ***Personal Application***

1. What evidence is there in your life that you are being sanctified thereby being an answer to the prayer of Christ? Be specific.
2. Respond to the following with a yes or no answer.
  - Do you know the Lord, or have you just heard of Him by the hearing of the ear?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
  - Have you ever experienced true conversion?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
  - Do you love self more than you love the Savior?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

### ***Hiding God's Word in My Heart***

*John 17: 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*