

John 17:1-8

### Introduction

To many, John 17 is the most remarkable chapter in the Bible. It is the only long prayer of Christ we have. It leaves us with a great sense of awe and wonder. The Lord had finished His Upper Room discourse and now turns from instruction to intercession. Some have called it the Lord's great high priestly prayer. One of the functions of the high priest was to bear the needs of the people of God and make intercession for them. And this is the pattern of intercession which the Son, as High Priest, is ever carrying on for us in heaven, a work He is doing for us now.

The High Priest in the Old Testament had a shoulder piece with the names of the people of Israel engraved on two stones. Also a breastplate into which was embedded the names of the people of Israel. Thus the High Priest literally bore the names of God's people before Him on his shoulders and heart.

We are going to consider three aspects of this prayer – what Jesus says about Himself, about His disciples, and those afterwards yet to become disciples. Starting today with what we learn about Jesus Himself from His prayer.

### The prayer which Jesus offers

**Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you** (John 17:1). Jesus' work on earth had come to an end. God had given Him His work, and He had completed it to perfection. He asks His Father to bring glory to His Son by carrying Him through the Cross and the grave, and then exalting Him to His own right hand.

Mysterious and awe-inspiring sentence – **Glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began** (John 17:5). Before He came to the world, He shared the glory of God. This fact is quite beyond our comprehension. He pre-existed with the Father, two distinct persons who shared equal glory. When He came to earth, His glory was veiled. Occasionally it flashed forth, at the transfiguration and in the miracles. Now His full glory was about to be seen in His death, resurrection and ascension. We can understand how His resurrection and ascension showed His glory, but how did His death glorify Him? Repeatedly Jesus saw His death as the time He was glorified.

On a human level, we can think of examples of people whose death has led to them being glorified. Often, when and how they died showed people what and who they really were. They were criticized and misunderstood in their lifetime, but their deaths revealed true greatness and glory. After Abraham Lincoln's murder, Stanton, his war minister who was contemptuous of Lincoln during his life, saw his dead body and said, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen."

Similarly, when Jesus died, the centurion at the foot of the Cross said, "Truly this was the Son of God." His death demonstrated His humility, His love, the burden which He bore, the undeserving for whom He died.

*“See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down.  
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown.”*

So Christ was glorified in His death, triumphant resurrection, and now has the enjoyment of honour and majesty at the right hand of the Father, which He had before the world began. And in doing all this, God Himself was glorified. Christ’s obedience showed His desire to save, the righteousness of His law, and His power over the Devil and over sin. “As in a splendid theatre, the glory of God was manifested in the Cross of Jesus” (Calvin).

#### The gift which Jesus has bestowed

**You granted Him authority over all people, that He might give eternal life to all those you have given Him** (John 17:2). Eternal life for those who believe on Christ. This is viewing the matter from our human angle. Now eternal life for those given by the Father to the Son.

The Father has given a company of people as a love gift to the Son in the eternal counsels of the Trinity. Mystery connected with election and predestination. All are invited to repent and believe. God does not will any to be lost. No one can say, “I was not given to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved”. Yet people who are saved are those given by the Father to the Son. C.f. the marriage ceremony, the minister asks, “Who gives this woman to be wed?” as if he does not know, and with varying degrees of reluctance or willingness, the father of the bride says, “I do”. The father takes his most precious gift and presents it to the bridegroom. The Father takes us, chosen out of the world, and He presents us to Christ to be His love gift.

In His turn, the Son gives us a gift – eternal life - as we turn and believe on Him. Life indeed. Life of God in the soul of man. Eternal life is a present possession, to be enjoyed in fullness beyond the grave, in His many mansions. Absolute secure possession. Enjoyed as we know the Father and Son.

#### The revelation Jesus has made

**I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world** (John 17:6). **I gave them the words you gave me** (John 17:8). Jesus not only gave eternal life, but He revealed God to believers. A.V. “I have manifested Thy name unto men”. In the Old Testament, the name a person was given was not just the sound by which a person was called, but it was a summary of their whole nature and character. **Those who know your name will trust in you** (Psalm 9:10). That does not mean that people who know what God is called will trust Him, but those who know what God is like. So Jesus, in manifesting God’s name, is saying, “I have shown these men your real character and shown them what you are like.” Another way of saying, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” When we see Jesus, we know there is a God and we know what He is like. He brought the remote and invisible God so close that even the simplest people may know about Him, speak to Him, and take His name on their lips.

*“Lord of all being, throned afar,  
Thy glory flames sun and star.  
Centre and soul of every sphere  
Yet to each loving heart how near.”*

Regarding His disciples, Jesus says they have kept His word, they had believed that God had sent Him into the world. **They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me** (John 17:8). Wonderful words, when we consider how weak they were. Weak, and cowardly, and dull. Soon after these words, they all forsook Him and fled, one denied Him, another betrayed Him. Yet He graciously speaks of them in high and honourable terms.

There is much comfort here for us all. Jesus sees more in His people than they see in themselves, or than others see in them. The least degree of faith is precious in His sight. When the Saviour sees true faith in Himself, however feeble, He looks with compassion on many infirmities and passes by many defects. Men who are weak and unstable, but who believe Christ, are loved by Him. We can rest our souls on this fact. Even in the light of our weaknesses, even when we are ashamed, so long as we believe in Him, cling to Him, bring our burdens to Him, we can take comfort in Jesus' words. Do not give way to despondency. Christ did not despise the disciples because of their feebleness, but He bore with them and brought them on to better things. And He never changes. What He did for them, He will do for us.

### Conclusion

Christ was glorified in His death, resurrection and ascension. He gives the gift of eternal life to those who believe on Him, and He reveals God to men. He delights at the response of those who believe.