

April 27, 2014

# The Lord's Prayer

By Bryan Hodge

The context: Death was near. Jesus knew it. He, with concern for His disciples, prayed. Let us observe for whom and what He prayed.

## 1. Himself (John 17:1-5)

"Father, the hour has come" (John 17:1a). The reference is to the time for His death (John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23-24; 12:27 cf. 17:1a).

"Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You" (John 17:1b). He prays for Himself. There is nothing wrong with praying for self (Matthew 6:11; 6:12-13a; John 17:1; Luke 22:46; 1 Peter 5:6-7). However, His prayer for self was not entirely selfish. He desired to be glorified, so that He could be used to glorify the Father. Prayer should not be purely selfish (James 4:3).

Consider the following prayers: (a) David prayed, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous spirit. Then, I will teach transgressors Your ways and sinners shall be converted to You" (Psalm 51:12-13). (b) Solomon asked, "I am a little child. I do not know how to come out or come in... Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:7-9). (c) Hezekiah prayed, "O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his (Sennacherib's) hand, that all the kingdoms of earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone" (2 Kings 19:19). (d) The early church prayed, "Now Lord, look on their (The Sanhedrin's) threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word" (Acts 4:29). Paul requested that the church at Ephesus pray for him so that he might "boldly... make known the mystery of the Gospel" (Ephesians 6:19). (e) He asked the Colossians to pray, "That God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ" (Colossians 4:3). (f) He prayed to be able to see the brethren at Thessalonica so that he could "perfect what is lacking" in their faith (1 Thessalonians 3:10). (g) He wanted to visit Rome to help them be "established" (Romans 1:11). Are you noticing a pattern? Pray for self? Yes. Pray selfishly? Never!

Suggestions: Instead of praying, "Father restore my health" with the thought so that I can spend my time pursuing my own pleasure, it would be better to pray, "Father restore my health so that I may be of greater service to You." Instead of praying, "Father bless my business" with the thought so that I may be a wealthy man, it would be better to pray, "Father bless my business so that I may have greater ability to support Your work."

## 2. His disciples (John 17:6-19)

He prayed for their unity. "I pray for them... that they may be one as we are" (John 17:9a, 11). How much were they to be one? The model is found in the unity of the Father and the Son. Wrap your head around that! Unity is important. Jesus said, "I am glorified in them" (John 17:10). Whatever we do is to be to

His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). This includes our unity. “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

He prayed for their sanctification. “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one... sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:15, 17). He did not want His disciples to be monks living recluse from the world. His disciples were to be the salt and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). In order to be a good example to the world, they needed to live it (1 Peter 2:12). They needed to be sanctified, set apart by the truth, living in the world but not of the world (John 17:15-19).

He prayed that they might know His joy. “These things I speak... that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:13). Concerning Jesus, we are told, “Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

It is good to pray for others. Consider Paul’s prayers: (a) “I pray to God that you do not evil... that you do what is honorable” (2 Corinthians 13:7). “I pray, that your love may abound still more and more...” (Philippians 1:9). “We... do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...” (Colossians 1:9).

### **3. Future believers (John 17:20-26)**

He prayed for their unity. “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they may be one, as You Father, are in Me and I in You; that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20-21). This is the second time unity is mentioned in this prayer. A lack of unity leads to unbelief. It becomes an excuse for not being a Christian, not a legitimate excuse, but an excuse none-the-less. Paul also was concerned about unity. He wrote “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Again he wrote, “let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind” (Philippians 3:16). If we are serious about leading the world to Christ, then we must be serious about Biblical unity.

He wanted them one day to be in heaven. “Father I desire that they whom You gave to Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me” (John 17:24). The Father gives souls to Jesus through the New Testament message (John 6:37 cf. 6:44-45). Jesus wanted these souls one day to be with Him. Jesus earlier told the disciples, “I go and prepare a place for you... that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). However, this prayer includes others who would be taught by the disciples, and come to believe (John 17:20, 24). It will only be possible to be with Him in glory by being glorified (1 John 3:2 cf. Philippians 3:20-21).

It is appropriate for us to be concerned about others, and pray for them, even for potential future believers. We should pray, for example, for opportunity to study with others (Colossians 4:3). We can pray that they come to know Christian joy (John 17:13); that they be kept from the evil one (John 17:13), sanctified (John 17:17), and unified (John 17:11, 21) to the glory of the God (John 17:1).

May we learn to pray like Jesus. Let us be a people of prayer.