

**To Exalt Christ;  
To Equip, Encourage, Exhort, Edify God’s Elect**

**Preparing For Departure – Called to Prayer  
John 17:1-26**

This morning we come to John 17 and the last portion of the **Upper Room Discourse** as recorded by the apostle John on the eve of the first Good Friday. This discourse was intended by Jesus to prepare the disciples for his departure, i.e. his death which he knew would be the very next day.

In chapter 13 he prepared them by setting the example of what it meant to be *called to serve* by washing their feet but his supreme example of serving would be the cross. In chapter 14 he prepared them as they were *called to trust* in God and in him. He was going to prepare a place for them and there was only one way to that place. He was that way because he is the truth and the life. In chapter 15 he prepared them as they were *called to remain* in him and in his love and live lives in obedience to him. In chapter 16 he detailed the important work of the Holy Spirit after he had gone. They were *called to work*.

Now in chapter 17 he prepared them by being *called to prayer*. This final preparation began with Jesus praying for himself, then for the disciples and lastly for the believers.

**Prayer For Christ – John 17:1-5**

Jesus began by praying for himself. Notice however that only 5 verses were prayer for himself, while 15 were for the disciples and 7 for believers. The emphasis is on others, especially the disciples who will be going out to preach the gospel, which will be outcome of the following three days.

In verse 1 Jesus prayed, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” To glorify according the Greek of John’s day is **“to render or esteem glorious, to make glorious, to honor, magnify, extol, praise.”** We would call that worship. However, due to the equality between the three persons of the Trinity, worship is not the intent. The Son does not worship the Father or the Holy Spirit and neither do they worship the Son. So how can the Father glorify the Son and the Son glorify the Father?

The glorification comes by what they do. Verse 2 tells what God has done through Christ for us – “For you granted him authority over all people that he

might give eternal life to all those you have given him.” God gave Jesus authority over all people for eternal life. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus in the **Great Commission** said, “All authority in heaven & on earth has been given to me.” It was authority to send the disciples out to make disciples, baptize them, teach and preach the gospel in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

That authority was also that, “he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.” In John 6:39, Jesus said, “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.” God gives us to Christ having chosen us in eternity so we would be saved for eternity. Discipleship is not temporary. It is permanent. He describes this permanency as eternal life.

He defines it in verse 3 – “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” Ephesians 2:1 tells us that prior to knowing God we were dead in our trespasses and sins. But when we come to know God and Christ and the Holy Spirit we then have eternal life. We know what they have done for us. John Calvin said – ***“That knowledge which forms us anew into the image of God from faith to faith, by which, having been ingrafted into the body of Christ, we are made partakers of the Divine adoption and heirs of heaven.”*** Christ died and rose again to make us anew into the image of God, eternal children, heirs of heaven. Jesus prays this work will be to their glory.

### **Prayer For Disciples – John 17:6 – 19**

Jesus next prays for the disciples. These are the men he has spent the last three years of his life with. In verse 6 Jesus tells us that God had given these men to him - “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.” That same language is in John 6:39 of God giving people to Christ. It means that the origin of their salvation and ours is God, having been chosen and given to Christ for that purpose. He is sovereign, he is supreme and so by his grace, pleasure and will, God is our Saviour in Christ. John Calvin writes – ***“The origin of election is from the donation of the Father, that we are given into the custody and protection of Christ.”***

The disciples are, as Calvin said, in his custody. God has given them to Christ to be his first ambassadors of the gospel to the ends of the earth as commissioned in Acts 1.

In verse 8 Jesus said – “For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you and they believed that you sent me.”

IOW they learned about repentance and faith and forgiveness of sin. They learned of his divinity, that he was the Son of God. They learned of his power, his being the resurrection and the life and the only way to God the Father. They learned of his coming death and resurrection, but also his second coming in power and glory, gathering the elect, sorting out the sheep and goats, the wheat and weeds.

They accepted all that with certainty because they knew who Jesus was and where he had come from. They believed by sight. Seeing was believing! That distinguishes our faith from theirs, because without seeing we have believed. In John 20:29 Jesus told Thomas – “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” That is us. So what did Jesus pray for the disciples?

Jesus prayed in verse 11 for their protection. “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one.” God’s name as **“Holy Father”** is powerful to protect because it reflects his holiness and righteousness. Those attributes, when possessed by the disciples, will protect them from all that is unholy and unrighteous. The righteousness of Christ, when it is imputed to the disciples, as it is to us, will not only give protection but also union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It makes us one.

Second, he prayed in verse 17 for their sanctification – “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

IOW, Father make them holy, sanctify them by your word which is truth. God’s holy word when we hear it and receive it transforms us. It has been said that grace never leaves us where it finds us. Grace always transforms the sinner into a saint. It is the same with his word. This was his prayer for his disciples.

### **Prayer For Believers – John 17:20-26**

In verses 20, 21 Jesus said, “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message that all of them may be one.” He prays for those who will believe in him through the message of the disciples. By their message, i.e. the preaching of the gospel, there will be those foreknown and foreordained by God who will believe and receive Christ fully, be saved and be with Christ where he is

and will see his glory. That is Jesus' prayer for the believers, for us. It is why you are here today as a believer because he has prayed for you.

John Calvin writes, *“Our faith is founded on the Gospel taught by the apostles. Christ acknowledges us to be his heritage, and pleads with the Father for us.*

Prayer prepares for what lies ahead. It was Jesus' last act in preparing his disciples for what was ahead for them. The glory that he prayed for was coming. He was called to prayer and so are we called to prayer. *Soli Deo Gloria.* Amen.