

## John 17:24-26

### Introduction

We've been three weeks, now, in John 17, which is Jesus' prayer for His disciples before He goes to the cross. This morning, we're going to start at the beginning of this prayer and follow it to its conclusion in verses 24-26. As we do this, we should be able to see that here is a summing up of John's Gospel to this point. Here is what the Savior prays for His own; Here is what our Lord prays for us. May this be a source of peace and joy and comfort for us; and may our own strivings reflect more and more the Father's answer to Jesus' prayer. Jesus begins in verse one:

**I. John 17:1** — “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You...”

The goal of this prayer is the glory of God. It's the mutual glorifying of the Son by the Father, and of the Father by the Son. This prayer isn't “about” us; it doesn't have us as the center. And so here at the beginning, we may feel as if it's not even for us to be “listening in.” But here's the wonderful mystery! *How* is God to be glorified? “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You...”

**II. John 17:2-3** — “...*even as* You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

God is glorified in the gift of eternal life that He gives to us. He is glorified not primarily through something we do or something we give to Him, but rather through what He has given to us – the gift of beholding His glory in the Gospel; the gift of seeing and knowing the Father in seeing and knowing the Son. God is glorified when He is known, and this *is* the gift of eternal life. It's in this light that Jesus prays:

**III. John 17:4-5** — “I glorified You on the earth, having finished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

If we were ever to feel like we're on the outside listening in, that would be now, wouldn't it? But we'd be wrong to feel that way. Jesus glorified the Father on earth by making Him *known* to us. And now why does Jesus pray that the Father would glorify Him together with Himself with the glory they had together before the world was? He prays this because He wants *us* to be with Him where He is and see His glory (17:24-26), because to see His glory is to see the Father's glory. This is the consummation of the eternal life we've already been given. On the one hand, we have eternal life *now*. So Jesus prays:

**IV. John 17:6-8** — “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.”

The possession of eternal life now is the guarantee of our future entrance into the fullness of that eternal life. And yet eternal life isn't something that works "automatically" (fatalistically). How are we to arrive safely at the consummation of our eternal life when we know God fully and when God is most fully glorified in us? Jesus prays:

**V. John 17:9–11a** — "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me..."

The world in which we live is a constant threat to our eternal life. The world threatens to press us into its mold and shape us after its own priorities and values – which can only result in death. So Jesus prays, "*Holy Father, keep them in Your name...*" Do not let them be pressed into the world's mold, but sustain them in their true knowledge of You – in their true knowledge of Your *holy name*, which You have given to Me and I have manifested to them. Our eternal life can never be separated from our holiness. In fact, God keeps us in eternal life by keeping us in holiness – by keeping us in His holy name. And then Jesus continues:

**VI. John 17:11b** — "...that they may [always] be one even as We are."

Oneness is the sign that we're kept in eternal life. It's the sign that we're being kept in the true knowledge of God, who *is* one. Eternal life and holiness and oneness are all three of a piece together. It's only in this light that we can fully comprehend the miracle of being kept.

**VII. John 17:13–17** — "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth."

When Jesus was keeping and guarding those who belonged to the Father and whom the Father had given to Him, His keeping and guarding was 100% effectual ("not one of them perished"). Now He prays as He leaves the world that the Father would continue keeping and guarding *us* in the same way. Can there be any doubt that the prayer of Jesus will be answered? Can there be any doubt that the Father's keeping and guarding will be 100% effectual? The Father keeps us not just *for* eternal life *at the end*, but *in* eternal life *now* – which is to say that He keeps us—He preserves and sustains us—in true holiness and oneness. And what is the means by which God does this? He keeps us by His word. He keeps us *in* His name by the revelation *of* His name that He has given to us in Jesus.

For all the hostility and threat of the world, though, Jesus doesn't ask the Father to take us out of the world.

**VIII. John 17:18–19** — “As You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. For their sake I consecrate Myself, that they themselves also may be consecrated in truth.”

The mission upon which Jesus was sent into the world and on account of which He consecrated Himself was to bring in the sheep and join them in one flock (10:14-16); it was to gather into one all the children of God who are scattered abroad (11:51-52). Why, then, have *we* been consecrated and sent into the world? So that we might be the instruments through whom Jesus is bringing in those whom the Father has given Him out of the world, *and* so that we might be the flock into which all the sheep are being gathered as one. Jesus says:

**IX. John 17:20** — “I do not ask [these things] on behalf of these [eleven disciples] alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word...”

What is Jesus asking for all who will ever believe in Him (cf. 17:11, 15-17)? He’s asking that the Father will guard them all in a common holiness. He’s asking that the Father will preserve them all in a common commitment to the word of truth. He’s asking that the Father will sustain them all in a common “knowing” of the only true God. He’s asking that the Father will keep them all in a common eternal life. In all these things, then, we see that what Jesus is praying for is *oneness*. “I do not ask [these things] on behalf of these [eleven disciples] alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word...”

**X. John 17:21a (cf. 17:11)** — “...*that they may all be one* [always]; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us...”

Oneness is not peripheral to redemption; it contains within itself the whole of our redemption. Our oneness sums up all that our salvation is. And so this oneness is a oneness that’s visibly on display before the world. Jesus prays for this oneness—

**XI. John 17:21b** — “...so that the world may always be believing [at all times] that You sent Me.”

Whenever and wherever the world is confronted with the oneness of Jesus’ disciples (with their common holiness; their common commitment to Gospel truth; their common love for and trust in the only true God; in short, their common eternal life), the world will always be compelled to know and to believe that, in fact, Jesus *has* been sent by God. This helps us understand even more the true glory of our oneness. Our oneness is the vindication of Jesus and the triumph of His saving work even in the eyes of a world that remains hostile to Him. So Jesus continues in verses 22-23:

**XII. John 17:22–23** — “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected as one, so that the world may always be knowing [at all times] that You sent Me, and loved them [cf. Rev. 3:9], even as You have loved Me.”

The ultimate mark of God’s saving, redeeming love for is our oneness. Here, then, is not only the vindication of Jesus, but our own vindication in the eyes of the world. The world that hates us (v.

14) is forced by our oneness to know that God has loved us. In seeing this true glory of being one, we're compelled to pursue this oneness every day—to pursue, together, our common holiness, our common commitment to the word of truth, and our common knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent; to pursue, together, our eternal life. In seeing this true glory of our being one, we're also reminded of the reason we've been consecrated and sent into the world — so that *all* the children of God who are scattered abroad might be gathered *into one*. And now we come to the conclusion of Jesus' prayer.

**XIII. John 17:24** — “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me [cf. vv. 2, 6, 9], be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

What is this glory that the Father has given Jesus? On the one hand, it's a glory that Jesus had already with the Father before the world was. Jesus prayed in verse five:

➤ John 17:5 — “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

And yet this pre-incarnate glory is now uniquely tied to Christ's incarnate person as the Redeemer (cf. 17:22-23a). In other words, when Jesus is glorified again with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, He will assume this glory for the first time as the perfected and exalted Savior. Now the radiance and the splendor of His divine glory is but the radiance and the splendor of His redeeming power and love. This is the glory that the Father has given to Jesus. And this is the glory that Jesus desires we should see; not just the “naked” glory of deity, but a glory that envelops us and embraces us and that fully makes known to us all the infinite riches of the Father's saving love for us. This is the glory that Jesus desires we should see. This is the glory we'll never fully be able to conceive of until we're finally with Jesus where He is, and we see Him as He is (cf. 1 Jn. 3:2).

Here at the end of His prayer, Jesus doesn't ask. He simply makes His will known (*thelo*; “I desire,” “I want,” “I will”). On what ground does Jesus so boldly make His will known that we should be with Him where He is and see His glory? Jesus answers this question when He prays: “for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” It's true that the Father loved the preincarnate Son before the foundation of the world (“You loved Me when I was with You before the foundation of the world”), but I don't believe that is Jesus' point, here. I believe what Jesus has in mind is the Father's love, even before the foundation of the world, specifically for His Son *incarnate in Jesus* (cf. Calvin; Jn. 3:35-36; 5:20-21; 10:15, 17). “You loved **Me**—the incarnate Redeemer of all those You have given to Me—You loved **Me** even before the foundation of the world.” It is the Father's eternal love for His *incarnate* Son, Jesus, in His capacity as our *Redeemer* that explains the boldness of Jesus in making His will known. “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have *given* Me [My glory which is to them eternal life], for You *loved Me* [the one who lays down My life for those you have given Me; cf. Jn. 10:15, 17] before the foundation of the world.” Perhaps as Jesus prayed these words, He was thinking of the prophet Isaiah:

- Isaiah 42:1, 6–7 — Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul is well-pleased. I have put My Spirit upon Him; *He will bring forth justice to the nations...* I am Yahweh, I have called You in righteousness; I will also take hold of You by the hand and guard You, and *I will give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations*, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who inhabit darkness from the prison.

See God’s love for His Servant, *as* the one who will bring forth justice to the nations.

See God’s love for His Servant, *as* the one whom He will give as a covenant to the people and a light to the nations. We read, again, in Isaiah 49:

- Isaiah 49:1, 5–8 — Yahweh called Me from the womb; from the body of My mother He made My name to be remembered... So now says Yahweh, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to return Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (for I am honored in the sight of Yahweh, and My God is My strength), He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to cause the preserved ones of Israel to return; *I will also give You as a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*” Thus says Yahweh, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One, to the despised One, to the One abhorred by the nation, to the Servant of rulers, “Kings will see and arise, princes will also bow down, because of Yahweh who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.” Thus says Yahweh, “In an acceptable time I have answered You, and in a day of salvation I have helped You; and *I will guard You and give You for a covenant of the people, to establish the land, to make them inherit the desolate inheritance.*”

See again God’s love for His Servant, *as* the one whom He will give as a light of the nations so that His salvation may reach to the end of the earth. See again God’s love for His Servant, *as* the one whom He will give for a covenant of the people, to give them their full inheritance.

It is the Father’s eternal **love** for His incarnate Son, Jesus, in His capacity as our Redeemer that assures us that we will one day be with Jesus where He is and see His **glory**. The Father’s love for *Jesus* is a love that by its very nature encompasses and includes all of *us* whom the Father has given to Jesus and for whom Jesus laid down His life. This is why Jesus prays, “You... loved them, *even as* You have loved Me” (v. 23b). It’s in the Father’s eternal love for Jesus that He has loved us—and that He has therefore loved us even before the foundation of the world. It’s in the Father’s eternal love for Jesus that He has loved us—and that He *will* therefore love us always and forever. And so it’s because of the Father’s love for Jesus—and for us in Him—that we can know we will one day be with Jesus where He is and see His glory that the Father has given Him – not just the “naked” glory of deity, but a glory that envelops us and embraces us and that will fully reveal to us on that day all the riches of the Father’s saving love for us. This is what Jesus desires for us. This is why He came, and lived, and died, and rose again. This is why He prays this prayer. Who can fully conceive of the *love* of Jesus, and of the **love** of the Father, for us? We never can until we’re with Jesus where He is and we see His **glory**.

So Jesus concludes—and we listen in with joy to these words which were intended for our ears:

**XIV. John 17:25–26** — “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these [whom You have given Me] have known that You sent Me [I know, then, that in Your righteousness, you will do according to all that I have asked for Me and for them]; and I have made Your name known to them [not to the world, but to these whom You gave Me out of the world; cf. v. 6], and [I] will make it known [in and through the Advocate whom I will send and who will testify of Me; cf. 14:25-26; 16:14-15], *so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.*”

We can never fully conceive of the love of Jesus or of the love of the Father for us until we're with Jesus where He is and we see His glory. But already, Jesus has made known to us—and *is* making known to us—the Father's name. Already—however partially or however dimly as through a glass (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12)—already, we have seen His **glory** (cf. 1:14). Which is to say that already we have been made partakers of His **love**. I don't believe there could be any more fitting response to this prayer of Jesus than these words of the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter eight:

- Romans 8:35–39 — Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or turmoil, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE COUNTED AS SHEEP FOR the SLAUGHTER.” But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.