

The Church That Jesus Is Building.
The Lord's Prayer For The Church (Part 1) - Pastor Roger Ridley
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In this message, we will consider the Lord's Prayer for His Church. Most people, as soon as they hear the title, *The Lord's Prayer*, have a specific prayer in mind, and can actually quote at least part of it. But technically, that is not the Lord's Prayer, it is a model prayer that Jesus gave to His disciples to teach them how to pray.

Today however, I would like us to consider what is, in fact, the Lord's Prayer. Please open your Bibles to the Gospel of John, chapter 17...

Unlike the Model Prayer, this is not a prayer for you and I to mimic. Only one person could pray this prayer, and that was Jesus. Many refer to it as *the High-priestly Prayer of Christ*, and certainly it is that. Jesus, as our Great High Priest, about to make **the only sacrifice** that could care for our sins, brought Himself, His disciples, and all of us before the throne of our Heavenly Father.

But more specifically, I have come to recognize this as a prayer of consecration. In our previous lesson from Matthew 16, we considered the promise of Christ to build His Church. His Church would be built upon **Who** He was, as the Son of God, and **What** He would do, as He set His face toward the Cross. He has now reached that moment, He is about to go to the Cross, and upon doing so, the foundation will be laid for the building of the Church. In this prayer, Jesus commits the whole process, the whole building program to the Father.

There are **three parts** to His prayer, with the Church in mind, He prays regarding Himself, regarding the Apostles, and regarding **all of us** who would, ultimately, make up the Church. In this message we will consider the first two parts, and then follow next time with the third part.

A few weeks ago, our hearts were stirred, and our level of excitement was raised, as we heard the church builders talk about the church building process you and I are about to commence. Let's continue to be stirred up and excited, but let's do so with our Lord's prayer for the Church in mind. After all, it is **His Church**, and all the excitement in the world will accomplish nothing if we do not build **His way**.

First, Jesus prayed regarding Himself.

Look at verses 1-5...

The occasion of this prayer, was the night in which Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (John 13). It was a **most solemn** occasion. Jesus spoke of His betrayal, of His being forsaken by the Apostles, of His arrest, and His death. **Every heart** in the upper room was troubled. Before they departed for the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus lifted His head, and He prayed.

As Jesus prayed regarding Himself, there was especially one thought in mind- **glory**.

I am not sure if any of us really understand that word. It is both simpler and more complex than most of us are able, or willing, to grasp.

The word refers to a surrounding radiance of light. Think of the Sun, as we look at it, it's brightness, it's radiance, it's glory causes us to turn away. In 2 Chronicles 5, when the glory of God filled the newly built Temple, it says that the priests could not stand because of His glory.

Another word that is often used to describe glory is *excellence*. Back in Exodus chapters 33-34, Moses asked to see God, and God granted his request. Look with me at Exodus 34:6-8...

As God passed by, Moses was hid in a cleft of a rock because of the brilliant splendor of God, but he also heard of God's excellence.

Every time, we gain a better understanding of the person of God, we are witnesses of His glory. When we feel the warmth of the sun upon our face and we thank God for it, we are acknowledging His glory. When we read the Word of God, and are prompted to live in obedience to Him, we are responding to His glory.

In these 5 verses, Jesus uses the word *glory* in three ways:

First, in reference to the task that was before Him. He said... From Genesis 3:15, all of Scripture was pointing to this one hour when Jesus would be the sacrifice for sin. When He would perform *the one act* that would make salvation possible, the Church possible, and eternal life possible.

I like the definition of eternal life provided here by Christ, it is to know *the only true God*, and Jesus Christ, whom He sent. I wonder, do you know them. Not know about, but have a personal experiential knowledge of them? Jesus said in John 14 that to know Him is to know the Father. In John 14:6...

Second, He spoke of *glory* in reference to His earthly ministry. In verse 4 He said... In His earthly ministry, Jesus glorified the Father through the combination of His words and works.

Third, He spoke of *glory* in reference to His pre-incarnation. In verse 5 He said... The glory He here speaks of is His glory as the Second Person of the Godhead, unveiled in all His splendor. We get a glimpse of this in John's description of Him in Revelation chapter 1.

This 3-fold glory that Jesus spoke of stands on it's own. He is who He is, and He's done what He's done. Our response one way or another will not change anything. It is this 3-fold glory of Christ upon which the Church is built. His death on the cross for sin, the words and the works of His ministry, His position as the Son of God is the reason why the gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church.

Reflecting upon His glory, as members of His Church, what should our response be today? It **should be** different than it quite often is. We treat the Church of Christ with disrespect in the way we talk about one another, in the way we treat one another, in the way we gather, or choose not to gather, together. In doing so, we diminish the glory of Christ in our midst.

What should our response be? When Paul saw the glorified Christ on the road to Damascus, he fell to the ground and worshipped. When John saw the glorified Christ on the isle of Patmos, he fell to the ground and worshipped. What about you and me? When we meet as the Church, is it with an understanding of Christ's glory? If it is, then we will be moved to genuine worship.

Second, Jesus also prayed regarding His Apostles.

Look at verses 6-19...

As Jesus prayed for His Apostles, there was one subject that He especially had in mind- *the world*.

In the Bible, the world is used in three ways: it is used for the planet we live on; it is used of the people who live on this planet; and it is used to speak of a system that is opposed to God. In His prayer, Jesus used all three ideas: verse 5, the physical world; verse 6, the world of people; and verse 14, that which is opposed to God.

The Apostles had a significant role in the Church that Jesus was about to build. In Ephesians 2:20, it says that we are built upon the foundation of the Apostles. They are not the ultimate foundation, Jesus alone serves in that position. He alone is the Rock upon which the Church is built. But the Apostles were responsible for teaching the doctrines that we recognize as the standard of truth, by which the Church is established and functions. In Acts chapter 2, it was the Apostles Doctrine that the Church continued steadfastly in. It is *that same doctrine* that we strive to continue in today.

In His prayer Jesus first stated what was true of them:

They were given to Him by the Father. Verse 6

He manifested the Father's name to them. Verse 6

He taught them the words of God. Verse 8

They received His words, and believed that He was sent from the Father. V. 8

Jesus even said that He was glorified in them. Verse 10

That encourages me. The Apostles were far from perfect, but as they responded to the words, the works, and the person of Christ, He was glorified in them. When you and I respond to what the Lord is doing in our life, He is glorified in us as well.

Because of their significant role in the building of the Church, and because they would be left behind in a world that often opposed the things and the people of God, Jesus made specific requests for His Apostles:

First, He prayed that they would be kept in and through God's name. (Verses 11-12) That's security! We often associate security from harm with various names, but there is no name more secure than God's name.

Second, He prayed that they would be kept from evil (verse 15). This is not only the Evil One, but also the evil that is in this world.

Third, He prayed that they might have His joy in them. (verse 13; 15:11; 16:20-24) Please note that this is **His joy** and not the world's joy that is being referred to here. This is the joy of knowing the Father's will. This is the joy of living in obedience to Him. This is the joy of having our prayers answered. A lot of Christians today do not have joy because they are trying to experience the world's joy instead of the Lord's joy.

Fourth, He prayed that they would be sanctified. (verses 17-19) To be sanctified is *to be set apart*. In this case, to be set apart from the world and unto God. The means of their sanctification was the truth, that is *the Word of God*. If you want to be set apart unto God, then you must spend time in His Word. That is **the only means**, through the sacrifice of Christ, that He has made available to us.

As Jesus prayed for His Apostles, He also prays for us. Hebrews 7:25 says that He ever lives to make intercession for us. He continues to pray for our security, our deliverance, our joy, and our sanctification. I don't know about you, but that gives me a great sense of confidence as I continue in this world seeking to live right, talk right, and accomplish that which God has given me to do.

Based on these first two parts of our Lord's Prayer for His Church, I want to conclude with a few very important questions:

- (1) Do you have eternal life because of your personal knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent?
- (2) Is Jesus being glorified in you because of your obedient response to His Word?
- (3) As Jesus continues to pray for you, are you living in His security, His deliverance from evil, His joy, and His sanctification?