

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 30th May 2010

‘The Real Lord’s Prayer – Part 2’

John 17:15-26

Introduction

Last Sunday night we began to look at this great prayer of the Lord Jesus that we find here in John ch.17. I said we would look at it over two evenings.

Last time we saw Jesus praying for three things:

1. His Own Glorification (vs.1-5)
2. Our Salvation (v.3)
3. Our Preservation (vs.6-15)

Tonight we’re going to be looking at three more things that Jesus prayed for in this Great Prayer. It is sometimes known as the Great High Priestly Prayer of Jesus. I prefer to call it, ‘The Real Lord’s Prayer’ because here we see and hear Jesus in deep intercession with his heavenly Father.

Tonight we will hear Jesus praying for...

4. Our Sanctification (vs.15-19)
5. Our Unification (vs.20-23)
6. Our Glorification (vs.24-26)

So first of all tonight, let’s look at what Jesus prayed as far as our sanctification was concerned:

4. He Prayed for Our Sanctification (vs.15-19)

The word sanctification has a double meaning. It can either mean to make holy, or to set apart as special. Both ideas are here in these verses.

God calls us out of the world, out of the general population, and saves us by his grace, placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts. As he does so, he sets us apart as special, as belonging to God. That is a one-off event.

But from that moment, the on-going task of sanctifying us begins, the task of making us more and more holy, until we are perfect like the Lord Jesus himself. Notice how Jesus prays for us here:

*‘My prayer is not that you take them out of the world
but that you protect them from the evil one.’*

Yes, Jesus calls us out of the general population to be saved, but he doesn’t call us to live apart from the world. He calls us to live in the world, as a witness to the world, but he prays for us to be protected from the evil one as we do so.

‘They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.’

Here Jesus makes the point that we don’t belong to the world anymore, in a very real sense. Once we belong to Jesus, our citizenship is in heaven, *‘this world is not our home, we’re just a-passing through’* so we are no more of this

world, than Jesus himself is. So we've been set apart, we're different, but we're not holy yet, we're not perfect yet, like Jesus. So that's why Jesus prays:

'Sanctify them by the truth; your Word is truth.'

He prays that God the Father would sanctify us, that He would make us more and more holy. And we're told here, how we can be made holy – it is through reading, studying and applying the truth of God's Word to our hearts and lives. (That's what we were learning this morning from 1 Timothy!)

'As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.'

In a very real sense this is the Great Commission as found in John's Gospel. Just as God the Father sent Jesus into the world on mission, so Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, in turn sends us into the world on mission, to be his witnesses, to attract and point men, women, young people and boys and girls to the Saviour. That's why our lives need to tell for Jesus; that's why we need to be different and distinct from the world around us, in how we live our lives.

'For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.'

By this Jesus means that he set himself apart for us. He lived a perfectly holy life, and then he laid down that life as a perfect atoning sacrifice for our sins. That was the only way that we could then be set apart, saved, and then truly sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. So just as Jesus set himself apart for us, so we in turn need to set ourselves apart for Him, and seek to live our lives for him 'on mission' in this world.

So as well as praying that we would be saved, and kept, He also prayed that we would be made holy in the fullest sense of that word. Then next...

5. He Prayed for Our Unification (vs.20-23)

As soon as you mention the word "Unity" people immediately jump to all sorts of conclusions: They hear 'Ecumenism!' - All churches unite! Set aside your differences! For the world's sake present a united front regardless of your differences behind the scenes! But I regard that as false-ecumenism: unity at all costs, despite sincerely held biblical & doctrinal differences.

But on the other hand you would think sometimes that "unity" was a bad word even in evangelical circles. Has the devil got the victory over us that much? The last thing that the devil wants is for the true church of Jesus Christ to be united. As long as he can keep evangelical churches divided, he can discredit the gospel as much as he likes!

But here in John 17 we find that Jesus prayed that His Church *would be* united. So we need to take this matter seriously.

If Jesus prayed for it, it must be important.

It must be His will, and therefore it should be our concern.

Let's notice some things about this Unity that Jesus prayed for.

(i) Who are we to unite with? (v.20)

Jesus said, "*My prayer is not for them alone.*" - Remember from the last time who "them" referred to? (See vs.6-12)

Answer - His original 12 Apostles / Disciples.

Now in v.20 he says, "I pray also for *those who will believe in me through their message* - that **all of them** may be one."

So Jesus had been praying for his Apostles who had been with him while he was here on earth. But now he pauses - and He looks down through all the ages of time since -and says,

"I pray also for those who will believe in me through [the message my Apostles will preach.]" He prays that all of those people – i.e. The Apostles, and those who will believe their message - might be one - United. So Jesus is here praying that all true believers of all time might be united as one.

All those who have believed and accepted the message the Apostles preached (Acts 2:36-38). This cannot be one visible church structure - because some of these people are already in heaven. It is the invisible universal church of all time that Jesus is talking about here.

"Church" = individuals who have been 'called out' of the world and who believe personally in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

We today are part of that same body, the same invisible church as the Apostles were part of, and so we are united with them.

United by doctrine - teaching the same Gospel message; and united by faith - faith placed in the same finished work of Christ on the cross.

So in vs.20-21 we are united with the Apostles, but according to v.20 we are also to be united with all those who have come to believe in Christ through the Gospel (i.e. all true born again believers.)

Now this does not mean that we are to unite with 'all church-goers' everywhere, but with all the individuals in all the churches worldwide who have personally believed in Jesus Christ through the Gospel.

It is actually impossible for believers to have '*fellowship*' with unbelievers (2 Cor.6:14-15), so it is spiritually impossible to unite with all church-goers because many of them are not truly born again believers.

There were two further criteria that Jesus spelt out for us in vs.6-8.

* We are to unite with those who accept the authority of God's Word the Bible, and who have not deviated from it (v.6 and v.8). And who obey God's Word. A mark of true believers is that they will be **Bible-Centred people**.

* And we are to unite with those who accept that Jesus Christ has come from God (v.7 and 8b). ie. They must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He is God. So another mark of true believers is that they are **Christ-Centred people**. They accept the Deity of Christ, that He is God the Son, and that He is the only mediator between God and men.

* And to complete the picture from v.20 true believers will also have accepted and believed the one true Apostolic Gospel. i.e. the same Gospel the Apostles preached. So true Believers will be **Gospel-Centred people**.

Those are the three criteria that Jesus Himself used in this prayer for Christian Unity. These therefore are the criteria that we should use today as we talk about Unity. We have an obligation upon us, if we are Bible-believing, Christ-centred, Gospel-preaching people to foster unity with other Christians in other denominations who are Bible-believing, Christ-centred and Gospel-preaching people.

So we don't just drop all our standards and unite with anybody. But we ought to reach out the hand of friendship and fellowship to all those who meet these three criteria.

If you think about it for a moment - it makes sense. We seek to foster unity with such people, because we are already spiritually united to them through Christ. We don't have to *make* the unity - we have to *foster* the unity that already exists. (See Ephesians 4:1-4).

(ii) Jesus wants us to be united for a reason. (v.21).

"May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Jesus believed that true Christian unity would be a testimony to the watching world that Jesus had indeed come - that the Father had sent the Son into the world.

Now the devil is a master of confusion. I'm sure he's gloating over all the organised ecumenism that has gone on in recent years. Where 'Christian' denominations across the world have thrown aside the criteria I've outlined for you above and have just united with anyone! But it hasn't encouraged the world to believe that Jesus has come - has it?

Jesus prayed that true believers would unite and be seen by the world to be united, in order that the world might believe that Jesus has come into the world. But sadly the devil has caused such confusion that the church in these days is anything but a testimony to the world. All sorts of churches have united - but the problem is, nobody knows what they believe anymore, and therefore the Gospel that could save this world has been lost in the middle of all the confusion.

(iii) In v.23 Jesus prays that the true church will be brought to complete unity, so that the world, whether they believe or not, will know without excuse that Jesus has come into the world, and that Jesus has loved the church in the same way that the Father loved Him (see Ephesians 5:25-27).

This is Christ's goal for his church - to make her holy, radiant, without blemish, and blameless. Therefore she must be Biblical, and Christ-centred, and Gospel-believing and proclaiming, but she must also be united, truly united. Because a divided church is not a blameless one!

(iv) If these were Jesus' desires, what should our response be then?

* We too should pray for true unity to be seen in Christ's church.

* We should pray against the confusion of false ecumenism.

* We should seek to replace false unity with true unity around those three criteria:-

The Deity of Christ, The Authority of the Bible, Faith in the Apostolic Gospel.

* But just like charity, Unity must begin at home.

How do you get on with the other believers in this church? (Eph 4:3)!

How do you get on with other true believers in other churches?

Are there things that evangelical Christians can do together in an area, that they couldn't do on their own? (e.g. Momentum?)

Wherever we go in this world, if we find other people who fit these criteria, then we need to put out our hand to them and accept them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Because of the three criteria we have identified in Jesus' prayer for what constitutes a true believer, I believe that it is not *churches* coming together, or some new *organisational structure* that we need, it is simply *individual believers* from whatever church background, acknowledging and accepting other true believers from whatever background they come from, and seeking to encourage and help and work together with them - I think that is what will speak volumes to the watching sceptical world we live in. Finally...

6. Jesus concludes by praying for our Glorification (vs.24-26)

This is a great theme to end on, because thoughts of our glorification turn our thoughts to Heaven itself. (Read v.24 and then read v.22).

Jesus wants us to be with Him, to behold His Glory, and to be Glorified ourselves! He wants us first of all...

(i) 'To be with him' (v.24)

Why does Jesus pray for our Salvation, our preservation, our sanctification, our unification and our glorification? Why? Well the answer is here in v.24 - Because he wants "US" - you and me - to be *with Him!* - *one day*.

That was why he called his disciples in the first place. (Mark 3:14).

That was what he promised the thief on the cross. (Luke 23:43).

And that was how Paul comforted sorrowing believers. (1 Thessalonians 4:17,18).

Why do you want to go to Heaven?

You might have many reasons, but the best is that Jesus will be there!

He wants us to be *with Him*; I hope we want to be with Him too?

That, above all else, is why we should want to go to Heaven. (Psalm 16:11).

(ii) 'To behold his glory' (v.24)

Some of our older hymns really looked forward to beholding Christ's glory in Heaven.

eg. 1012 - "When by His grace I shall look on his face,
that will be glory, be glory for me."

1005 - "I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
By the print of the nails in His hands."

994 - "Face to face shall I behold Him."

We will behold his glory when we get to Heaven. But have we lost sight of it here?

(iii) 'To be glorified ourselves' (v.22)

You may remember that some weeks ago I talked about Joni Eareckson - a young woman who was confined to a wheelchair, because of a swimming accident, when she dived into a lake and broke her neck when she hit the bottom. But through that experience she found God - she put her trust in Christ. Now she sings, writes and paints.

I told you that she wrote a song called, "*There just aren't enough songs about Heaven*" - and she wrote a book called, "*Heaven - what will it be like?*"

She's looking forward to heaven, because there she's going to have a glorified resurrection body!

But so are you, and so am I! We're all going to have glorified bodies in Heaven (See Revelation 21:3-5a).

No more sickness, pain, death, tears or sorrow! We will be glorified!

Conclusion

In the meantime, it's great to know that the Saviour we're going to meet there, is the Saviour who is praying for us right now, today (Hebrews 4:14-16).

He's praying for our salvation - Has that been answered for you?

He's praying for our preservation and our sanctification - That is being answered!

He's praying for true unification among believers - will we play our part to see that answered?

And He's praying for our glorification - That will be answered!

See Jude v.24,25.

Amen.

