

## Gospel of John Study Session 32

In our last session we came to the end of Jesus' farewell discourse which He began back in chapter 13. In chapter 16, Jesus wrapped up His address to His disciples by sharing with them four revelations that would give them hope and courage in Him as well as prepare them for the mission God had for them after His impending departure through the cross the next day. Those four revelations were the rejection by the world, the Holy Spirit, Jesus' reappearance after His death, and that of the Heavenly Father.

Now in this session, Jesus goes from the address to His disciples into a prayer, often called the "High Priestly Prayer" and in this Jesus will pray for Himself, His disciples, and then lastly all the disciples who are both present and future (the church). This prayer will summarize Jesus' relationship to the Father and the relationship He desired for His disciples to maintain with the Father. For this depth of relationship with the Father, Jesus knew His disciples would need protection from the world and at the same time need to see the glory of Jesus as they entered into their own relationship with the Father and Son. In some ways, this prayer is almost a summary of the entire book of John.

### 1. Jesus' prayer concerning Himself

#### **[John 17:1-5]**

Jesus' posture in prayer was to lift up His eyes to heaven and speak. This is the traditional Jewish posture in prayer. After speaking with His disciples, He now speaks directly with His Father so that the disciples can hear the prayer.

Q: What was the "hour" to which Jesus referred in v.1? (*In John, the "hour" always refers in some way to Jesus' death on the cross.*)

It is important to realize that the concept of the "hour" is not Christian fatalism. Rather it is prayer based upon the knowledge of His Father's will for Him.

Q: What does Jesus pray the Father will do for the Son? (*v.1 - glorify the Son*)

Q: What was the purpose of the Father glorifying the Son? (*v.1 - So that the Son may glorify the Father in return*)

This is the only petition Jesus requests for Himself in this prayer. Glory, in this context, means to clothe one in splendor. This glory spoken of by Jesus refers to the totality of the incarnation. Though the cross is still in the future, it is spoken of as if it was already past. The hour would glorify the Father by revealing His sovereignty over evil as well as the compassion of God for mankind and the redemption of believers. The same event that would lift up the Son in terrible agony and shame would be the same event the Father would use to lead all people to praise Jesus for bearing their sins. Jesus spent His entire ministry on fulfilling the Father's purpose and delivering the Father's message. Now Jesus was requesting, by asking for the Father

to glorify Him, to return to the state He had with the Father before His mission to earth, in essence to reverse the humiliation and condescension of the incarnation. Yet, this section also shows the Son's willingness to obey the Father, even to death.

**[Philippians 2:5]** - The "mind of Christ" Paul refers to in this verse is the same mindset or attitude that Jesus held to in this prayer. He sought the Father's glory by complete surrender to the Father's will, even when it meant complete humiliation and death. He wants this glory, not for Himself but so that He can further glorify the Father.

Verses 2 & 3 are explanations of verse 1.

Q: What authority did the Father give to Jesus? (*v.2 - to give eternal life to all whom the Father gave to Jesus. While this sounds Calvinistic, it isn't. Throughout John, he keeps a strong balance between the issues of God's sovereignty and man's free will and responsibility in responding positively to God.*)

This lets us know in what way Jesus glorifies the Father. He does so by imparting eternal life to those who believe in the Son the Father sent.

Q: How does Jesus define eternal life? (*v.3 - that man may know God - the only true God and Jesus Christ*)

Notice the eternal life is not described in chronological terms but rather relational terms. Life is about involvement with one's environment. Death is the cessation of such involvement. This highest life is thus the life lived in the highest environment, the one that includes true knowledge of God. For our lives, as humans, to be fulfilled, we must know God. Eternal life is endless because it will take eternity for us to develop a knowledge of God who is eternal in every way. One of the teachings of the new covenant is that all believers will know God personally without any intermediaries.

**[Jeremiah 31:33-34]**

**[Habakkuk 2:14]**

Q: What does a relationship with God look like in our lives? (*many answers, it begins with knowing Jesus*)

To know God through a relationship with Him is to be transformed into this new life which cannot otherwise be experienced.

**[II Corinthians 5:17]**

Q: In vv. 4 & 5, what are the two "glories" Jesus speaks about? (*v.4 - the first one is the glory Jesus gave the Father by His work in the world. The second is in v.5 and is the glory asks the Father to give Him when He returns to heaven.*)

The glory of Jesus' work includes all His work, including the cross, which is still yet to come. Jesus was aware that He could have refused the cross but had irrevocably resolved to complete the work the Father had sent Him to do.

Q: What does Jesus mean when He prays v.5? (*He is saying that before He came to earth, He was glorified with the Father.*)

Q: What does this tell us about Jesus' nature? (*He existed with the Father before the creation of the world*)

Through this prayer, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that He pre-existed with the Father and is equal with the Father (when not in His current incarnated form where He voluntarily humbled Himself to the Father). An interesting note is the once Jesus had come in human, bodily form, He never surrendered His body again. He came with a standard earth-suit but left with a transformed earth-suit, glorified through His resurrection.

To review, the only petition we hear from Jesus concerning Himself is for the Father to glorify Him, the Son in order that He might glorify the Father.

## 2. Jesus' prayer concerning His disciples

The grounds for Jesus' prayer for His disciples is that the Father is the One who gave the disciples to Jesus in the first place. This gives us the reason for Jesus to be praying for these people and why the Father should grant this request. This is the largest section of the prayer and it shows us that Jesus was more concerned about His disciples than He was for Himself. Despite knowing that they would desert Him, Jesus is going to pray for them to be kept by the Father's power and thus prepared for their future ministry.

### **[John 17:6-19]**

Verses 6-8 give the reasons for Jesus' confidence in the Father's work in the lives of His disciples.

Q: What had Jesus made apparent to His disciples? (*v.6 - His Father's name*)

Q: According to v.6, what is the difference between Jesus' disciples and the people of the world? (*They had responded positively to the revelation of God through Jesus and now were keeping the Father's word. Thus the counter or balance to the Calvinist argument in v.2*)

The disciples had been part of the wicked world and not intrinsically better than anyone else. The difference was that they had been chosen by God and that they responded positively to the self-disclosure of God through Jesus Christ. While these men were certainly not perfect, they recognized the message Jesus brought as having come from the Father. They had understood Jesus to be the Messiah since the beginning of His ministry. They had committed themselves to Jesus as the Messiah, the One who reveals the Father already and held to it. Jesus said that they

had kept the Father's word. The word "keep" means to "guard" or to "hold fast" to "not let go of something". While they were confused at the moment and had many wrong expectations, they had this: they did not give up on believing the message that Jesus had delivered to them as coming from God. The problem Jesus saw and was praying about in these verses (6-8) was that they were about to be thrust into a mighty test of faith through the persecution to come. He didn't want that persecution to separate them from Him or one another. Verse 8 expands on the "words" that the Father gave Jesus. The word for "word" in v.8 means the spoken word of God, not the written word or Scriptures. It was often used to mean the "teaching". The disciples heard Jesus' teaching and believed it.

Q: In v.9, about what does Jesus remind the Father? *(That these 11 disciples were under His care)*

Jesus is very concerned about His disciples and thus He prays for them by reminding the Heavenly Father that they are His and under His care.

Q: Who is Jesus not praying for in v.9? *(Those in the world)*

Q: Why does Jesus not pray for those in the world at this time? *(Because they have not been given to Him by the Father. They are still in open rebellion against Him and now are the future cause of any grief and persecution that His disciples will face. Jesus is not going to pray for protection for those in open rejection and rebellion against the Father and His will.)*

This brings up the sharp but not absolute contrast between the world and Jesus' disciples. While Jesus doesn't pray for the world's success or protection due to their rebellion, He knows the Father loves those in the world (John 3:16). He prays for His disciples along theological grounds in that "they are Yours". There is no hope for the world (as it represents ignorance and rebellion against God) but there is some hope for some of the people in the world.

Q: What is Jesus expressing in v.10? *(He is expressing the equality He has with the Father. They share everything. They share the same interests and responsibilities, though Their roles are different.)*

Think of this. The glory that the disciples had given Jesus at this point in His ministry is slim pickings to say the least. However, it is above what the world has given Him and that which His disciples will give Him will grow and multiply over time - the time after Pentecost. This should give us immense hope. That while we may falter and fail in our walk with Jesus from time to time, if we will continue to hold tight to His words to us then we will bring more glory to Him over time. We aren't judged on our shortcomings. Also, the value of Jesus is growing in us, as it did the disciples. We see just how much we love Him and His worth to our lives much more plainly as we walk with Him over time.

**[Romans 8:33-34]** - This shares with us that Jesus is interceding for us before the Father and this prayer in John gives us some of the content of that intercession on our behalf - that we bring glory to Him and our Father.

Q: What is the reason Jesus gives for praying for His disciples in v.11? (*He is leaving them*)

Jesus is praying for their protection in the upcoming danger. “Holy Father” - this is the only time this title for God is used. It combines the awesome transcendence of God with His familial intimacy. By this title, Jesus is contrasting the Father with the selfish and uncaring world that confronted the disciples. This is the same word “keep” or “preserve” as in v.6. Notice that Jesus is asking the Father to keep them in His name. (IN is the correct translation here, not BY.) Jesus is asking for them to stay loyal or steadfast to the revelation He gave them. The purpose that Jesus is speaking about is that they may be one, or kept in unity. Only in God’s name can people be kept in perfect unity. Only God is absolute and righteous and loving and just. To attempt to be united in the name of any human or cause is to be self-destructive as everyone would have a differing standard to which they were trying to get the group to attain. Yet, in God’s name, the name of Jesus Christ, believers can be truly united with God and each other as He is a higher being than humans. This unity is not a legislative unity but rather it is the unity experienced between the Father and the Son. The unity of the church must stem from the common life imparted to believers so they can withstand and witness to a hostile world. This unity was shown to us through the love the Father and Son had for one another as well as the Son’s perfect obedience to the Father and the Father’s perfect response to the Son.

As a side note on the word “keep” in this chapter, it’s interesting that it is typical for this word to often be translated “obey” in most other locations in the New Testament - as to hold to or obey or keep a commandment. However, I think the translators finally got honest with themselves in this passage as to the true meaning of the word by dropping the “obey” with “keep” thus stressing the true message which is to hold onto the Word of God, the truth that Jesus is the self-revelation of the Father. By showing fidelity and steadfastness to Jesus and His word, obedience flows naturally. It’s the attitude of perseverance and guarding that makes obedience possible. Thus obedience is the ultimate outcome of keeping God’s Word.

As another side note, the name the Father gave Jesus was the very name of God, once again stating that Jesus is God.

Q: While Jesus was with the disciples, what did He do for them? (*v.12 - He guarded them. He kept them in the Father’s name.*)

Q: Which of the disciples perished? (*v. 12 - Judas Iscariot, the son of perdition*)

Q: What was the reason for Judas’ falling away? (*v.12 - to fulfill Scripture*)

The reference to the “son of perdition” was a common phrase in use during Jesus’ day. It literally means “son of ruin or loss or destruction”. It was used of a abandoned character or one who was utterly lost and given to evil. It had the meaning that such a one had finally met its end or time of righteous judgment.

**[II Thessalonians 2:3]**

Notice that the same term is used to describe the antichrist. Judas is shown by Jesus to be one who had made his choices in life and ended up so far from Christ that he killed himself and lost the hope that Jesus came to give him. In the process Judas did fulfill Scripture. Jesus kept the disciples safe in His name but Judas was the exception due to his own rebellion. In this, Judas showed himself to be of the same spiritual genus as the antichrist.

**[Psalm 41:9-10]**

The “these things” of v.13 refer to the entire farewell discourse.

Q: Why did Jesus speak “these things” to His disciples? (*v.13 - so that they might have His joy*)

A literal translation of this passage goes like this: “that they may keep on having Christ’s joy in their faithfulness realized in themselves.” In other words, their faithfulness or keeping to Jesus’ word is what will yield joy. In John 15:11 (in the analogy of the vine) Jesus said the same thing in different words in that the joy of Jesus is given in abundance to those who abide (remain) in the Father’s love. Jesus wants His disciples to share in His joy.

Q: From our study in chapter 15, does anyone remember the New Testament definition of joy? (*It is the deep sense of contentment and satisfaction gained from knowing the God’s will is being accomplished. Thus in Hebrews 12:2, Jesus, when facing the cross had joy. Not happiness the emotion, when He contemplated the cross but joy understanding that it was fulfilling God’s will and bringing salvation to mankind. So the disciples could know joy despite the conflicts they were about to experience. The key in everything Jesus teaches about joy is that there is absolutely nothing in this world that will promote joy. The world cannot give joy ever (due to its constant ignorance of God’s will and rebellion against God Himself. Joy usually has an emotional element to it, like gladness, but it is the by-product of witnessing God’s work being done, not the primary aspect of joy.)*)

Like Jesus, when the disciples developed an awareness that they had the Father’s acceptance and a consciousness of God’s will being accomplished and an expectation of seeing God’s glory, they would have a fulness of joy but it would come from their relationship with Jesus, not the world. Like Jesus, His disciples could know joy even in the tribulations to come.

**[Romans 15:7]** - One of the sources of our joy is that we have been accepted by the Father through our belief in Jesus Christ. Not all of our behaviors are approved by the Father but since His love is unconditional, once He accepts us, we are His forever.

Q: What was the result of Jesus giving His disciples the word of the Father? (*v.14 - the world hated them*)

Q: In v.14, Jesus says that “they” are not of this world. What is the “they” He is referring to? (*the disciples*)

Q: In what way were the disciples not of this world? (*They were originally part of the world but*

*their belief in the words of the Father radically separated them from the world and now they belonged to God. They possessed a new nature.)*

**[II Peter 1:3-4]**

**[I Peter 1:3-5]**

Believers have a new nature and it is a sharing of the divine nature. This new nature comes from our new birth. Birth determines identity, not performance. When we were born again, we were taken out of the line of Adam (the sinful line) and put into the line of Christ (the redeemed and holy line) (Romans 5). The life of Christ is the very nature of God within us through the Holy Spirit. This is why the world hates us (believers). The world demands conformity yet we are different in nature from the world due to our faith in Christ. By nature and affiliation, we are so different from the world that it cannot accept us so it must hate us as we cannot conform to its standards or practices. Those who take their stand with Christ will be rejected by the world.

Q: What did Jesus ask the Father to do for His disciples in v. 15? *(To keep them from the evil one)*

Jesus was leaving the world but His disciples were staying. Jesus did not ask that the Father remove them from harm's way but rather that they would continue to remain steadfast or guard the truth He had given them.

Q: What danger did the devil pose for Jesus' disciples? What danger does the devil pose for believers today? *(While he is a defeated foe due to the cross, he can still tempt and persecute believers so that they might lose heart and give up, thus becoming a useless witness and fruitless branch.)*

There are two major dangers that Christians are tempted to do when facing spiritual trouble. Both are wrong and outside God's will for His children. The first is live in a way so as to be confused with the world. This is where a believer's life is so immersed in the world that the world sees them like itself. There is nothing visibly different to persecute. The second is to withdraw from the world so as to set up a cloistered existence removed from the world. Neither of these options advances the will of God to bring the gospel to the world. It does nothing to bring the convicting contact of the Holy Spirit into the presence of those who desperately need to know Christ. This verse should lead us to ponder the real possibility of persecution as we become a Christian.

Verse 16 let the disciples know that they were not of this world just as Jesus was not of this world. Again, it is the difference in nature that separates them from the world. The world retains their sin nature while those belonging to Christ share His divine nature.

**[I John 2:18-19]**

Q: What does Jesus pray for His disciples in v.17? (*That they be sanctified*)

Q: What will the agent of sanctification be? (*the truth which is the word*)

The word sanctify has a few meanings. At its root it means to be holy. Often it can be used to mean the process of a believer growing in grace and truth into greater likeness of Christ. Here in John it has a different meaning. Here the word sanctify means to set apart by God for God's purposes. It is dedicating or consecrating something or someone to the task of God. The tense of the word "sanctify" in v.17 is aorist - meaning that the emphasis is on the act already completed upon the believer by God rather than the process. It's a deal done in the past that effects are still on-going in the life of the believer. The believer was so changed by God's word that it separated us from the world. The disciples are sanctified (set apart for the ministry God has for them) by the truth which is God's word. Since the word of God is truth, it sets an unchanging standard for the course and character of our lives. This echoes Jesus' "I AM" statement in **John 14:6** that "*He is the way, and the truth, and the life...*"

**[Hebrews 10:9-10]** - sanctification is a past act still binding and impacting the present and not a process in this verse, too.

Q: According to v.18, what is Jesus doing to His disciples? (*He is sending them into the world - again to withdraw from the world is not an godly option for a believer.*)

The word "sent" implies a special or specific mission. Jesus united the disciples with Himself in the work He began and wanted them to continue. By sending the disciples into the world, it forces the world to see the unity (or oneness) the believers have with Christ and each other, thus bringing conviction upon them. This shows the lost in the world the mutual exclusiveness of the life of a believer and the world. The Christian is to live in a manner that is set apart by God for this mission.

**[Matthew 28:18-20]**

The Great Commission is to make disciples of Christ. The first step in a person becoming a disciple is getting saved. The life of believers is the hope of this world. We are those who share the same message and share the love and forgiveness as Jesus. The dangers we experience in the world will be real but Jesus' victory in the resurrection assures us of our eventual victory over this world and its evil, demonic principles.

Q: Look at v.19, in what way does Jesus sanctify Himself? (*The word is used in the same way as in v.17. It means that Jesus has set Himself apart for the purposes of the Father and is committed to seeing them through. He has set Himself firmly and unwaveringly on the path that leads to the cross by His Father's will.*)

**[Hebrews 9:14]**

Jesus was not intending to make Himself "more holy" but devote Himself to God in the

interest of His work for the disciples. His example of dedication to the will of the Father would be the standard of sanctification for His followers. This devotion to His Father's will was ultimately displayed on the cross. So by Jesus sanctifying Himself, devoting or setting Himself aside for the Father's work, He is making it possible for His disciples to also be sanctified in the truth. Again, it is the truth that is the key to making sanctification possible. Without it there is no clear standard of what one is being set apart from or to.

Q: What should believers expect by being sanctified by God for His work based upon Jesus' example? (*We should expect to go through trials and persecution similar to Jesus.*)

**[II Corinthians 4:11-12]** - When death works in us, it produces life in those we minister to. The death is a death to ourselves and our rights to ourselves, our agendas and selfish ways but the death of these things leads to life in other people as they witness this death.

These last few verses of Jesus' prayer define certain aspects of eternal life. The first is that the authentic revelation of the Father is in stark contrast to the delusions, myths and misinformation that spews from the world. Next, Jesus claimed that He alone was the authorized revealer of the true God. As His revelation was accepted, the disciples progressed to a knowledge of the Father and solid faith. This faith untied them with Jesus so that they came under His protection and security in that they had eternal life. Lastly, eternal life implies that one has been sanctified in this manner and set apart for God's service.

In review, Jesus prayed for His disciples to be protected from falling away by the schemes of the devil in the world. He prayed for them to be set apart for the mission of evangelizing the world.

### 3. Jesus' prayer for the future believers (the church)

#### **[John 17:20-26]**

Q: Who does Jesus say He is asking all these things for in v.20? (*Not just His disciples who were present with Him at that time but also those disciples who would come to believe through the work of His disciples*)

We can see Jesus' expectations from this verse. Jesus expected the upcoming failure of His disciples to be only temporary. From the entire farewell discourse through this prayer the tone has been that after the resurrection their faith would be renewed and strengthened and they will carry on His ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. He also expected the work of the Spirit to add new disciples to their number. This was to include believers from that point in time forward.

Q: What is Jesus' request for these new disciples? (v.21 - *that they may all be one*)

Q: Who did Jesus want them to be one with? (v. 21 - *The Father and the Son and other disciples*)

Q: What will happen when Christ's disciples show this unity or oneness? *(The world will come to believe in Jesus through this display of unity.)*

This unity is built upon our joint submission to Christ. When all believers are submitted to Christ, then the world sees this oneness and is drawn to Christ. It allows the conviction of the Spirit to manifest in the lives of the lost. Notice that as more people are added to the list of disciples, the need for unity grows. The key is this unity is not grounded in a unity with each other but a unity that stems from the Godhead first then with other believers. This unity is not outward uniformity since Jesus and His Father are both distinct from one another and have distinct roles. Jesus was also not calling for agreement in external opinions. He said this unity would be one nature as He and the Father are one. The new birth brings people into the family of God by spiritual regeneration.

### **[Titus 3:3-7]**

Q: According to Jesus in v. 22, what is another way unity is brought about in believers? *(They witness the glory that the Father has given the Son and then He gives these later disciples His glory. This completes the revelation process that Jesus got from His Father. The Father gave the Son His glory and then the Son gave glory back to the Father. Then as the disciples believed in the truth, the glory of God was shared with them so that they beheld the glory of God. This in turn, leads to unity in the body of Christ.)*

Again, in v.23 we see that this unity is not just for believers to enjoy (though it does bring joy) but that it is for the sake of those lost in the world. This glory the Father had given the Son was the triumphal task of redeeming men to God, which He did through the cross and resurrection.

### **[Hebrews 2:9-10]**

By sharing in His calling and participate in His glory, believers are united with one another. God and man are united in bringing the new creation into being. The effect of unity is the confirmation of the divine mission of Jesus and the Father's love.

### **[Ephesians 2:13-22]**

So the two effects of unity are that the world sees Christ as the center of divine revelation as Christians claim and also that Christians have been caught up in the love of the Father and Son - secure, content, and fulfilled - guaranteed by God Himself. This is one of the strongest evangelical appeals that can be made. This is why Jesus prays for all believers to be perfectly united so they see God's glory (which definitely includes the lost coming to salvation and the joy of unity in Christ).

Q: What was Jesus' desire or will stated in v.24? *(He wants them to be with Him and witness His glory as it is in heaven. The truth is that while we will see Jesus face to face when we get to heaven, our spirits are already in heaven seated with Him now. See Ephesians 2:6 and*

*Colossians 3:1-4. Both passages teach us that our spirits are already perfected and with Christ now in the present time.)*

Q: When did the Father first love the Son? (*v.24 - before the foundations of the world - since eternity past*)

To see Jesus' glory is to do more than just recognize it but to observe it in person, by experience. Jesus' disciples witnessed the glory of God in the incarnation which was a massive humiliation, but He voluntarily accepted it for the sake of mankind and His Father's will. Jesus' incarnation glory was epitomized by such things as the footwashing in the upper room and the cross. Yet, He wanted all His disciples to see Him as He truly is. Which is further proof of Jesus' pre-existence.

### **[I John 3:2]**

The term "Righteous Father" is unique to this prayer (similar to Holy Father in v.11). The entire prayer is based upon God's righteousness. His judgments against the rebellious world are righteous. The Father will vindicate the Son by glorifying Him. Jesus' knowledge of the Father was founded personal knowledge and experience. The essence of this revelation is in the love of God which Jesus exhibited to His disciples. Jesus' purpose was to perfect us in this union with Him so we could come to know the Father. Jesus wanted His disciples to be in the inner circle and fellowship with the Triune God. Can you imagine that? We are loved by God to the same degree that the Father loves the Son.

Q: What did Jesus want to be in the disciples? (*v.26 - the love of the Father*)

So the purposes of Christ's continuing work through the Spirit are: 1) to ensure that the love of the Father for the Son may be in believers. They will be so transformed by God's own love that His own love for His Son will become our love for Him and one another, 2) That Jesus may be in believers. This is the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies concerning this new age where God will dwell with His people directly.

These three parts: Jesus praying for Himself, Jesus praying for His disciples and Jesus praying for the future believers (the church) make up this prayer which not only provides a capstone for the farewell address but also encapsulates the entire message of John.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?