

## John 17 • A Prayer for Overcomers

### Introduction

Just previous to this chapter Jesus said, “I have overcome the world”. (Jn. 16:33) In this prayer the word “world” appears 18 times as it is made clear to us that Jesus was, and is, the Overcomer; he was not a victim but the victor. Although Jesus opens with prayer for Himself, He will dedicate the most time to prayer for His immediate disciples which can be seen as translating to all who will follow Him during every age to the very present. This prayer reveals four privileges we have as His children, privileges which help to make us overcomers as well.

<sup>1</sup>Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, <sup>2</sup>even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. <sup>3</sup>This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup>I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. <sup>5</sup>Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

### [Read v.1-5]

**Q: Although this is obviously a prayer for Himself, what appears to be the greater burden Jesus is concerned with?**

A: It is the glory of God the Father, particularly as this glory would be realized through the work of the cross.

**Q: In terms of the whole of John’s Gospel, why is it important to note that Jesus finally states, “the hour has come” (v.1)?**

A: Five times previous John recorded specific events at which Jesus noted that His hour or time “had not yet come”. (Jn. 2:4; 5:25; 7:6; 7:30; 8:20) It is a repeated indication that Jesus lived according to the will of the Father.

**Application:** Christ sought the Father’s glory according to the Father’s Word and the Father’s timetable. How might we apply this to our self personally?

**Q: What are the different uses of the variations of “glory” used by Christ in these opening verses?**

1. In v.5 He refers to His preincarnate glory with the Father which He laid aside to be born on earth, serve, suffer and ultimately die.
2. In v.4 He refers to the glory He brought the Father through His earthly life and ministry, “having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do”.
3. In v.1 & 5 He asks that His preincarnate glory be given to Him again so that He might glorify the Father in His return to heaven.

**Point:** Predestination and free will are seen here in perfect and equal tension with each other as Christ carried out in the course of His life both God’s plan from before the beginning of time, yet still in harmony with the future in eternity.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

— Ephesians 2:10

**Q: How is the gift of eternal life provided to us?**

A: It has come about as a result of the finished work of Christ’s earthly ministry.

**Q: But what is ironic about the way the term “gift” is repeatedly used throughout this prayer?**

A: The reference in v.2 that Believers are the Father’s gift to the Son is the first of seven times this is repeated in this prayer. (Jn. 17:2, 6, 9, 11-12, 24)

**Point:** We are usually quickest to point out that Jesus was the Father's gift of love to us (Jn. 3:16), but Jesus affirms that Believers are the Father's "love gift" to the Son!

**Q: How do we now understand the work of Jesus' first coming to be completely and fully finished?**

A: By the proof that the Father answered the Son's prayer and gave Him the glory as He is now seated at the Father's right hand.

**Application:** Because He has been glorified in heaven, we have the assurance that God will fulfill the promise of the gift of eternal life on our behalf as well. We are overcomers with Christ who share in His life both in the present and in the one to come.

**[Read v.6-12]**

**Q: In the opening of this prayer, the main thought was that Jesus had given His life. What does He appear to be giving in this section?**

A: The revelation of the Father's name.

**Application:** In the Old Testament God revealed His name as the great I AM (Ex. 3:11-14). Jesus repeatedly employed this name in revealing His true nature:

- Jn. 6:35—"I am the Bread of Life"
- Jn. 8:12—"I am the Light of the world"
- Jn. 10:9—"I am the Gate"
- Jn. 10:11—"I am the Good Shepherd"
- Jn. 11:25-26—"I am the Resurrection and the Life"
- Jn. 14:6—"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"
- Jn. 15:5—"I am the Vine".

Jesus here states that they came to believe He is the Messiah because "the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from you". (v.8) In other words, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ". (Rom. 10:17) Salvation came from faith in the Word, not faith in the signs Jesus performed in the course of confirming the Word. Nowhere in this prayer does Jesus even mention a sign or miracle performed in the course of His earthly ministry.

**Q: But what is the greater teaching about God—the great I AM—which Jesus revealed?**

A: That God is our heavenly Father. Jesus invokes the word "Father" more than 50 times in His final teachings recorded in John 13-17 and more than 120 times in the Gospel of John overall.

**Point:** Jesus made it clear in His teachings recorded in John that He was sent by the Father, He was equal to the Father, and that His words and works came from the Father. It was a clear claim to deity which He communicated in the course of performing many miracles, but only those who took Him at His Word came to know and accept Him as the Messiah.

**Q: What is different about how Scripture handles names from the way we now use them in everyday life?**

A: We use names as a label to identify an individual or location; in Scripture names were assigned to people and places which paralleled something about their character or nature. Jesus is really talking about revealing the nature of the Father through Him as exemplified in the various aspects of His character conveyed in each of the seven "I AM" statements. When He says, "I have manifested Your name" (v.1), it

<sup>6</sup>"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. <sup>7</sup>Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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; <sup>10</sup>and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup>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, that they may be one even as We are. <sup>12</sup>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.

means that He has visibly revealed the nature of God.

*No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

— John 1:18

**Q: What is the lesson for us personally that we should get from the fact that while Jesus, in human form, was on earth He was able to guard and protect those who believed in Him?**

A: We have the assurance that a glorified Savior in Heaven is surely able to guard and keep us not just in the course of this life, but to deliver us into the one to come.

**Q: Why would the gift of Believers to the Son from the Father have a powerful connection to the covenant relationship of God's people under the Old Testament?**

A: The disciples and those who accepted Jesus as Messiah were Jews who belonged to the Father by creation and covenant, but now they are presented as a gift in order to belong to the Son. This is a powerful illustration of the fact that in Christ the entire Old Covenant is fulfilled.

**Q: What are the divine resources available to us listed in this section?**

1. (v.7-8) We have His Word which reveals all we have in Christ.
2. (v.9) We have the Son interceding for us to keep us safe and secure. (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 11:41-42)
3. (v.11) We have the fellowship of the church.

**Q: So what about Judas? Why could Jesus not keep Him safe like the others?**

A: Judas was never one of Christ's own: he was not a Believer, (Jn. 6:64-71) he was never cleansed, (Jn. 13:11), he had not been among the chosen, (Jn. 13:18), and he had never been given to Christ. (Jn. 18:8-9)

**Point:** Judas is **NOT** an example of a Believer who "lost" their salvation, but an example of an unbeliever **PRETENDING** to have salvation who is ultimately exposed.

**Application:** We are overcomers because we know His name—that is, understand His nature—and therefore share His life both now and in eternity.

**[Read v.13-19]**

**Q: What is the main benefit being highlighted now?**

A: "I have given them Your word". (v.14)

**Point:** The Father gave the Word to His Son (Jn. 17:8), the Son gave it to His disciples who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, passed the Word along to us. (2 Ti. 3:16; 2 Pe. 1:20-21)

**Q: What is the first and chief benefit of the Word according to Christ?**

A: It gives joy. (v.13)

**Application:** True followers of Christ do not find joy in the world but in the Word.

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<sup>13</sup>“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. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

*“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. So this joy of mine has been made full.*

— John 3:29

*Your words were found and I ate them,  
And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart;  
For I have been called by Your name,  
O LORD God of hosts.*

— Jeremiah 15:16

*I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,  
As much as in all riches.*

— Psalm 119:14

**Q: How does v.14 infer the second benefit of the Word?**

A: The hatred of the world is experienced by those whom God loves.

**Application:** *The Word reveals the true intentions and disposition of the world and exposes its deceptions and working. D. L. Moody wrote in the front of his Bible, “This book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book”. Just as the pillar of fire was darkness to the Egyptians but light to Israel, (Ex. 14:20) God’s Word is our light in this world of darkness but the world cannot understand the things of God. (1 Co. 2:12-16)*

**Q: What is the third benefit of God’s Word provided in v.15-17?**

A: The Word imparts God’s power for holy living. Jesus’ prayer in v.6-12 focus on security, but here it turns to sanctification—*in* the world but not *of* the world. The Word sets us apart from the world exclusively for Him.

**Q: What are the three aspects of God’s truth which are visited in John’s writings?**

1. His Word is truth. (Jn. 17:17)
2. His Son is truth. (Jn. 14:6)
3. His Spirit is truth. (1 Jn. 5:6)

**Application:** *We need all three to experience true sanctification: with the mind we learn God’s truth through the Word, with the heart we love God’s truth—His Son, and with the will we yield to the Spirit and put God’s truth into daily practice. It takes all three for a balanced and proper work of sanctification.*

**Q: What is the final benefit of the Word provided in v.18-19?**

A: It provides what we need to serve Him as witnesses in the world. The Father sent His Son into the world, now His Son sends us.

**Application:** *We are overcomers because we know the Word and how to use it in the course of daily life to enlighten, enable and encourage the complete work of sanctification.*

<sup>20</sup>“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; <sup>21</sup>that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

<sup>22</sup>“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; <sup>23</sup>I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. <sup>24</sup>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, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

<sup>25</sup>“O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; <sup>26</sup>and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

## **[Read v.20-26]**

### **Q: What is the burden (or focus) of Jesus' prayer in this final section?**

A: He prays for spiritual unity for every generation of Believer in the character of the oneness of the Father and the Son.

**Point:** *Individual Believers may belong to different fellowships, but all belong to Christ and each other regardless of time and geography.*

### **Q: What appears to act as a kind of “glue” to foster unity?**

A: The glory that Christ has given us in the course of this life is a testimony we will further experience that glory when we get to heaven.

### **Q: How does biblical unity differ from the world's concept?**

A: Biblical unity is not based on the external workings or constraints of the flesh, but the internal working of the Holy Spirit in the inner person for something which will last in eternity.

### **Q: What factor from the previous section is a necessary prerequisite in order to obtain biblical unity?**

A: God's Word. Before asking for unity, Christ asked, “*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth*”. (v.17)

### **Q: So as we grow in Christ, what should visibly result?**

A: As we grow in Christ the glory within begins to grow and becomes a testimony of Christ. Instead of seeing ourselves, others see and glorify the Lord. (Mt. 5:16; 1 Co. 6:19-20) “...*that the world may believe that You sent Me*”. (v.21)

### **Q: What are some of the reasons we can glean from this chapter as to why Believers should love one another and live in unity?**

1. We trust the same Savior and share the same glory.
2. We will all one day live in Heaven.
3. We belong to the same Father.
4. We desire to witness to the world about a saving faith in Christ.
5. We believe in the same truth and follow the same example Jesus provided.

### **Q: What appears to be the inevitable result of rightly applying the truth of God's Word to our life?**

A: “...*so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them*”. (v.26)

**Application:** *We are overcomers who share in His glory in this life as evidenced by biblical unity based on the Word, and in looking forward together to His glory in the next life. The proof that we have achieved this is found in how it shows in our personal testimony of Christ to the world.*

## Overall Application

**Q: What is missing from Jesus' prayer which is almost always found in our own prayers?**

A: There are no petitions; it is more of a "report" to the Father than a laundry list of personal requests.

*Those belonging to the world have many opportunities to know the Father—that is, to enter into a personal relationship so as to experience His nature, but prefer blindness and hardness of heart. Believers' most important task is to bear witness of God's saving message to the lost world.*

**Q: What are the two great biblical concepts Jesus brings together in this prayer?**

A: Truth and love. There is a necessary tension which must be maintained between the two. (Eph. 4:15)

*There is an old saying, "Truth without love is brutality, but love without truth is hypocrisy". The mind grows by taking in truth, but the heart grows by giving out love. Knowledge alone can lead to pride (1 Co. 8:1), and love alone can lead to wrong decisions. (Phil. 1:9-10)*

*The priorities of Jesus' prayer are:*

- *The glory of God.*
- *The sanctity of God's people.*
- *The unity of the Church.*
- *The ministry of sharing the Gospel*

*How well do these align with your own spiritual priorities?*