

Week of May 6-12

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Scripture Reading: Read John chapter 17

The Lord's Prayer is one of the first prayers most Christians commit to memory. Even many unbelievers are familiar with the way the prayer starts in the King James Version of the Bible, "Our Father, who art in heaven..." Although Jesus taught his disciples the prayer, he, himself, would never have been able to pray the prayer in its entirety. Huh? Think about it for a moment. How could Jesus have prayed, "Forgive us our sins"? He never sinned. It was only the fact that he was sinless that allowed him to serve as our substitute on the cross and to be able to offer his righteousness to us. Any sin on his part and we would have been lost. "The Lord's Prayer" is the Lord's only to the degree that he gave it to his disciples to pray.

If you really want the "Lord's Prayer," you have to go to today's chapter reading. John chapter 17 contains the longest prayer recorded in the gospels that Jesus, himself, prayed. It was offered up on the night Jesus was betrayed before he and his disciples reached the Garden of Gethsemane. It naturally divides into three parts.

1) In the first section (verses 1-5), Jesus prays for himself, requesting that his Father would glorify him.

2) In the second section (verses 6-19), Jesus prays for his disciples. Knowing that he was leaving them, he prayed for their protection and their sanctification (i.e. their growth into holiness).

3) In the final section (verses 20-26), Jesus prays for us. Yep, you heard that right. Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, prayed for us. Notice in verse 20, "My prayer is not for them (i.e. the disciples) alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message." That's us, folks. The disciples shared their faith with people who, then, trusted Christ for their salvation. These new disciples shared their faith and so on and so until someone shared their faith with you and with me. All these disciples through all the centuries were prayed for by Jesus.

And, what was his prayer for us? That we would be one! Why was this so important to Jesus? Such unity reflects the relationship he has with his Father and it serves as a testimony to unbelievers that the Father sent Jesus to this world and that the Father loved his people even as he loved the Son (verses 21 & 23). In other words, our unity in Christ with one another is to be one of the greatest witnessing tools at our disposal. If we get it right and live in unity with other believers through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the world will stand up and take notice. They will see the living Christ in our midst and be drawn to the Savior. No wonder Jesus stressed the love command in chapters 13 and 15 and prayed for unity here in chapter 17. Our unity in Christ will bring others to faith in Jesus. It's a pretty valuable lesson to learn from the "Lord's Prayer."

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Reflect on how you are doing with the "unity" matter. Are you out of relationship with other believers and need to make things right? Repent now and ask the Lord to work in your heart to be able to live in unity.

Take-away: *Be an answer to Jesus' prayer...live in unity with other believers!*