

John 17:1-5 – “The Hour, the Life, the Glory”

(Pew Bible Page: 903)

Intro: The true “Lord’s Prayer.” That’s the way many commentators describe John 17. They point out rightly, that what we call “The Lord’s Prayer,” should really be called, “The Disciples’ Prayer,” since Jesus could never pray it for Himself. Why would He need to say to the Father, “Forgive us our trespasses?” It is not unusual to hear John 17 referred to as “The Holy of Holies,” of Scripture, for in these verses we listen to the Son of God praying to God the Father. What a privilege we have to listen in! Tonight we’ll hear Jesus praying to the Father for His own need – He needed to be glorified. What did He mean by this? Why is this so important? Let’s dive in and see that...

Proposition: As Jesus manifested God’s glory through perfect obedience to the Father’s will, so we should strive to manifest God’s glory through our obedient following of Christ.

Billboard: (vv.1-2) The Awaited Hour
 (v.3) The Eternal Life
 (vv.4-5) The Completed Glory

(vv.1-2) The Awaited Hour – All through the book of John, Jesus spoke of the fact that His hour had not yet come. Now, we find these striking words in His prayer to the Father: **John 17:1–2 - 1** *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.* THE HOUR HAD FINALLY COME! When Jesus had finished speaking to His disciples, He turned His face toward heaven and began to speak to His Father in prayer. As His disciples listened, they must have been struck by His words, “the hour has come,” after so often hearing Him say, “My hour has not yet come.” What was different about the hour facing Jesus? What did He mean by this and why was this so important to Him? The hour Jesus had been waiting for since His birth was the hour all Creation had been awaiting ever since the fall of man in the Garden. More than that, God Himself had been waiting for this hour, planning for its fulfillment since before the foundation of the world. The central hour of human history had come, the hour in which God’s purpose in Creation would finally be fulfilled. All that had gone before this hour had looked forward to it. All that has happened since has look back to it. The hour had come for God’s glory to be revealed through Jesus Christ, His Son. The whole purpose of Creation is the revelation of God’s perfect, infinite, excellence, and Jesus was about to fulfill that purpose through His perfect obedience to the Father’s plan. Notice what Jesus said: *“Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.”* What did He mean when He asked the Father to *“Glorify your Son”*? Jesus prayed here that the Father, through His sovereign plan’s fulfillment, would reveal once and forever the glory of the Son: His infinite obedience to the Father’s will. The glory of Jesus is His perfect fulfillment of His Father’s plan. Could anything be more revealing of Jesus’ character than His endurance of the cross? But, lest we think that Jesus’ request was for His personal glory alone, Jesus went on to reveal why He sought for the Father to glorify Him: It was so that He through His obedience might glorify the Father, Himself. What could be more revealing of the Father’s infinite perfection than the cross? How was this glory to be manifested? In verse two Jesus shows us the way: **2** *since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.* The Father had put all of humanity into the hands of Jesus, His Son, for the purpose of manifesting His glory. How did He do this? By giving eternal life to all whom the Father had given to Him. By His sacrifice in obedience to the Father’s will, Jesus demonstrated once and for all time both the LOVE and JUSTICE of the God. Justice because sin was justly punished; love because mercy was extended to the undeserving. This demonstration was the great passion of both the Father and the Son. The passion of Jesus was not to save our souls. His great passion was to glorify His Father *through* saving our souls. The purpose of the cross was God’s glory. The means through which God was glorified

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was the saving of our souls through the cross. This was the central moment of all human history, and Jesus longed for its completion for His Father’s glory.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] The purpose of the Creation – to glorify God – has been fulfilled through Jesus’ obedience to the cross.

[ILLUSTRATION] Philosophically, we say something is “good” when it fulfills the purpose for which it was created. Food is good when it is pleasant and nourishing. Art is good when it fascinates the mind. Children are good when they reflect honorably on their parents. Jesus came in perfect goodness. He came to glorify His Father, by giving eternal life to all whom the Father had given to Him.

[APPLICATION] As Jesus fulfilled His purpose to glorify the Father by perfect obedience to the Father’s plan, you and I can glorify God through obediently following Christ. Nothing tarnishes God’s glory before a watching world so much as God’s children acting in ungodly ways. When we put our faith in God through Jesus, the Son, we receive an amazing gift – eternal life. The purpose of our being granted this gift is so that we can glorify the One who saves us. As believers we should ask the Father to give us the same passion for His glory that we see modeled in Jesus, the Son. Like Jesus, we exist for God’s glory.

(v.3) The Eternal Life – We are told that the way that Jesus would glorify the Father was by granting eternal life to all whom the Father had given Jesus. But what is meant by “eternal life”? The answer is given in verse 3: **John 17:3 - 3** *And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* The idea of eternal life seems rather straight forward to most of us, doesn’t it? When you have eternal life, you get to live forever. We often think of eternal life in merely chronological terms. But as this verse shows, that isn’t at all what Jesus had in mind. His words reorient our thinking, removing eternal life from mere chronology, and placing it firmly in the sphere of relationship. Jesus said that eternal life is knowing the Father and the Son. To understand this, we need to consider what is meant by the word, “life.” One expositor has put it this way: **“Life is active involvement with environment. Death is cessation of involvement with the environment, whether it be physical or personal.”**¹ Someone who is alive can respond to what is going on around them; reply to questions; cook a meal; enjoy a joke. But the dead can do none of these things. Our commentator goes on to say, **“The highest kind of life is involvement with the highest kind of environment. A worm is content to live in soil; [humans] need not only the wider environment of earth, sea, and sky but also contact with other human beings. For complete fulfillment of our being, we must know God.”** The proper environment for people, in other words, is not just presence on earth, but also presence with and knowledge of the Father. That is eternal life. It’s what we’re made for. Because God is timeless, our time with Him will never end. Because God is qualitatively perfect, our time in His presence will be exquisitely perfect as well. Heaven makes sense, in other words, because those who live in God’s presence are eternally responding to His environment. For this reason, the Apostle Paul told the Athenians that, *“In Him we live and move and have our being”* (Acts 17:28). Jesus glorified God by giving this kind of relational “eternal life” to all whom the Father had given to Him. Not merely “forever existence,” but “forever relationship” with God the Father and Jesus the Son.

¹ Tenny, M. C. (1981). John. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: John and Acts* (Vol. 9, p. 162). Zondervan Publishing House.

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[DOCTRINAL POINT] Jesus glorified the Father by giving eternal life to the redeemed through a forever knowledge of the Father and the Son.

[ILLUSTRATION] I read the other day about the life of a famous British philanthropist who in his day was held in high esteem by all around him. He appeared to be generous and hospitable to many who shared his table. However, after his death, his diaries were published and those revealed him to be a man secretly enveloped in an inner darkness no one who shared his table had guessed. One prominent politician said after reading the diaries, “All my previously warm feelings toward him because of his hospitality came crashing down, and I thought to myself that those hours so refreshing to me, must have been torture to him.” He had been in his presence, without knowing his heart. Jesus came to reveal the heart of the Father so that all the Father had given to the Son might enjoy His presence forever.

[APPLICATION] God has revealed His heart to us in the cross of Jesus. We never have to wonder what God is really like. Does He love us? Is He trustworthy? Is He a promise keeper? Is He fair? Does He care about injustice? The cross answers all those questions and more. Oh, dear one! If only we could be gripped in our hearts by the wonders of God’s character displayed through the Father and Son at the cross, I truly believe it would be life changing. Once we have a clear view of God’s love and justice, our hearts are forever changed. We long for heaven, not because it’s a beautiful place, but because it’s the place where our Father lives and where Jesus lives, and we want passionately to be with them forever. The reward of heaven isn’t a mansion, or streets of gold, enjoyable as those might be. No. The reward of heaven is the presence of the Lord. That is eternal life in all its fullness.

(vv.4-5) The Completed Glory – Again, Jesus spoke of glory, but this time He spoke of a different kind of glory – a glory that He had shared with the Father before the world existed: **John 17:4–5** – *4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.* As we read verses 1-5 we may be puzzled by Jesus final request to be glorified in God’s presence. Hadn’t He already asked God to glorify Him in verse one? Yet here, Jesus is obviously asking the Father for a further glory – one that Jesus once had, but somehow seems to have lost. And how could Jesus be lacking glory anyway? Hadn’t His disciples seen His glory already? At the wedding at Cana, John tells us that **John 2:11 - 11** *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.* And what about Jesus’ manifestation of glory on the mount of transfiguration? Hadn’t Jesus been revealed in glory on that occasion? Since Jesus is God, and God is by nature infinite perfection, is this implying that somehow Jesus was not fully God? That can’t be it! What, then, is the meaning of this? The meaning lies in the fact that there are two kinds of glory. Before we study this, let’s think first for a few moments about what we are saying when we use the term “glory.” Glory has been defined different ways. One of my favorites says that “Glory is what you are famous for.”² Another, more precise explanation is that the term glory when applied to God speaks of His character – what He is like. That’s closer to the meaning, but there is one more meaning that is more precise still. Glory is perfection – God’s infinite perfection. His perfect power, presence, love, justice, wisdom – you name it. Glory, when it is related to God expresses the perfection of the divine nature. Now, as we think about this it is helpful for us to realize that this perfection has two different aspects: the inward and the outward. This seems to be the key to understanding these two requests of Jesus to be glorified in verses 1 and 5. The inward glory Jesus always possessed during His time on earth. He couldn’t be deity if this were not so, for then He would not possess the impeccable morality needed to propitiate the wrath of

² Jimmy Evans

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God on the cross. Jesus' spotless character and history was necessary for our salvation. So, when the disciples “*saw His glory*,” they recognized the excellence of His nature, even clothed in human flesh. But, the outward form of glory is another matter. The Old Testament calls this the “Shekinah” glory of God, meaning a brilliant light that accompanied God's presence in the cloud, the Tabernacle, and the Temple. When Jesus gave up His throne in heaven to take humanity into Himself, He temporarily laid aside that outward kind of glory, cloaking His inward glory in human flesh. This was necessary to His mission. How could He have become one of us, if that outward glory had shone through? Surely, the people of His day would have reacted the way the people of Israel reacted to Moses glorified face when he came from the presence of God on Mount Sinai. So, Jesus laid aside that glory until the hour came for Him to take it up again. Looking forward to the cross, Jesus spoke as if the victory of Calvary was already won in verse four: *4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.* Foreseeing the completion of His earthly work of glorifying the Father, Jesus in verse 5 requests of the Father the restoration of that Shekinah kind of glory He had shared with the Father in eternity past: *5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.* This restoration of outward glory is based on the Son's completion of the work the Father sent Him to accomplish and return to the Father's side. Jesus knew that when His work was completed, glory awaited His return to heaven. Both the Apostle Paul and the Apostle John have recorded seeing Christ in His restored glory after the resurrection (cf. Acts 9:3; Revelation 1:12-16). That outward glory was restored, signaling the acceptance of His work by His Father.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] When Jesus completed His work of glorifying the Father on earth, He was restored to His full glory in heaven.

[ILLUSTRATION] Have you noticed that as human beings, we tend to brag about the glories of great things we happen to be associated with? It might be a family, a sports team, a company, a nation, or a church, but we often sneak into our conversations quiet allusions to something we are associated with that seems a little glorious in our eyes. We do that because we secretly feel that somehow, we share, just a little bit, in the glory possessed by these entities with which we are associated.

[APPLICATION] As those who by God's grace have been placed “in Christ,” we too share by association something of the glory of our Savior. All the gifts of God to the Son are now ours in Christ. It's amazing to think about, isn't it? As Christ has been glorified by His Father, we too are even now sharing in the glory of His victory in that hour (cf. Romans 5:2; 8:30). Praise Him, dear one. Glorify Him. He has shown us the glory of the Father. He has brought us eternal life. He has gone back into heaven to be glorified once more forever.

Conclusion: Jesus prayed to His Father asking for just one thing: glory. As He brought glory to His Father by obediently fulfilling the Father's plan, so you and I can bring glory to the Son by faithfully following His commands. What a privilege to be part of God's glorious manifestation.