

"How the Resurrection Answers Jesus' Prayer"

John 17

After the last Passover and just prior to His arrest in Gethsemane, John records Jesus teaching the disciples some important but hard truths in 13-16. The big surprise in His teaching is that He tells His disciples He is going away to His Father's house to prepare a room for them but that He will come back for them [us] one day. Do not let your hearts be troubled (14:1). He also tells them in ch. 16 that they will be persecuted for their belief in Jesus but He ends ch. 16 saying,

³³"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

'I have overcome the world' – past tense. Even before He has died He is already certain of His resurrection, and that gives the groundwork for His prayer, next. Because if He does not rise the things He prays for cannot happen. So let's look at His prayer through the perspective of the accomplished crucifixion and resurrection and see how the resurrection answers His prayers and helps us pray confidently as well.

Jesus' prayer reveals His heart for us, His people. Like our prayers there's an overlap of thoughts so we're not going to be able to break it down into nice clean sections. But 5 clear requests do emerge that Jesus prays for all His disciples [the 11 then and you and me now].

So how does the resurrection impact His prayers for us? The resurrection assures us that

We Can Receive Spiritual Protection **(17:6-12, 15-16)**

After praying for Himself in vv.1-5 (which we'll come back to at the end) He prays,

⁶"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

Jesus knows that His crucifixion is going to throw the disciples into confusion. He knows they will desert Him temporarily. Just as He also knows that there are times in our life that difficult circumstances will tempt us to take our eyes off Jesus and stop looking above like we need to. So Jesus prays for our spiritual protection (not physical). If Jesus doesn't rise from the dead, we have no spiritual protection because the enemy has power over death because of our sin. But the resurrection defeats the power of death, and we have forgiveness through Christ which assures us of future victory over death one day.

Once we accept Christ we switch allegiances; we no longer belong to this world. Jesus obviously means more than geography. In John's gospel 'world' is often a reference to the sinful environment we live in (unless clearly indicated). Once saved we no longer belong to the sin-filled environment; we belong to God. But while we're still in this geographical world we are still tempted. So Jesus prays for our protection from the sinful temptations the world throws at us and from Satan himself who likes nothing more than to see us question our faith and choose worldly pleasures over pleasing Jesus.

We are kept safe by the power of Jesus' Name. Not that simply saying 'Jesus' is magical – all kinds of people use Jesus' name in many ways – but for those who believe in Him and trust Him, the authority that He has over the world and the enemy is tied up in His Name and identity.

This prayer tells us Jesus takes the enemy and the temptation of sin very seriously. Enough to pray for our protection from them. He also tells us He is the key to victory over sin and Satan. Jesus' Name represents who He is and all authority that He brings. He has authority over sin, over the world and over Satan. We pray lots for physical protection but perhaps we need to pray more for our spiritual protection. If Jesus prays this for us, shouldn't we pray that for ourselves, our family and each other? As well, if Jesus prays this for us how are we being an answer to Jesus' prayer? When we fall for the temptation to sin, we hurt Jesus and His father. We're going against what He's praying for us. Have we ever realized our obedience and trust in Jesus answers His prayers for us?

How else does the resurrection affect prayer? Jesus prayed in v.13 . . .

We Can be Filled with His Joy **(17:13)**

Without the resurrection we have no hope. Without hope there is no joy. If Jesus confidently prays for our joy this is something we can pray for each other as well.

Jesus prayed to God,

¹³But I am coming to you now but I say these things while I am in the world, so that they will have the full measure of my joy within them.

Jesus' joy (which would be eternal joy) is available now while we live on earth because He rose. This joy is available regardless of circumstances because He knows His disciples will struggle with sin and will suffer consequences for their faith. Yet, He still prays that they/we would know the full measure of His joy now.

Earlier that night Jesus also said,

^{15:9}As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

We experience Jesus' joy when we obey His commands and remain faithful/abide with Him. 'Abide' means dwell. When I live in Jesus; when I'm aware of His ongoing presence and love for Me and prayer for my protection then I can confidently obey Him knowing that He's with me even though

the world is against me. This joy is the 'peace that surpasses all understanding' knowing we are in the perfect will of God. David understood this himself. He prayed in Ps. 16:10-11,

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. ¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. ¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

If we doubt Jesus is with us and for us and assures of His presence and our salvation then we won't experience His peace and joy. Jesus prays we would experience the fullness of His joy now. Are we being an answer to His prayer? Are we praying that for each other?

Jesus also prayed for our testimony. He prayed in vv.16-19

The World Would See How the Word Sets Us Apart **(17:16-19)**

¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

Jesus prays that we would be sanctified as He's talking about us becoming more like Him; showing the fruit that Jesus dwells in us. 'Sanctify' means to be set apart for a purpose; God's purpose. Jesus has always been committed to God's purpose in His life. So He prays the same for us because one day, in God's presence we will be fully sanctified (cleansed from all sin) and be fully set apart to God. So Jesus prays this for ourselves now; that as we read and obey the Word we will become more separate from the sinful world we live in and more set apart to God. The truth of God's Word makes us distinct. We don't march to the drumbeat of the world but to God as He reveals Himself in His Word. If Jesus prays this for us it means it can happen.

This means we must be in the word regularly so the Spirit can speak to us and be ready to listen to do what He says. Then we will experience His joy and show our set-apartness to the world. Am I/are you answering Jesus' prayer to be set apart for God by obeying His Word? Are we praying this for each other? This is how Jesus is praying for us so this is how we should pray for one another.

How else does the resurrection affect Jesus' praying for us? Jesus prays . . .

That We Will Live in Unity so that People will be Saved **(17:21-22)**

Jesus knew the disciples would scatter at His crucifixion but He also prayed they would come back and be restored. That could only happen because of the resurrection.

When the resurrected Jesus appeared to Peter and the others on the beach after they went fishing, Jesus asked Peter 3 times if he loved Him – to which Peter said yes, 3 times – each time Jesus reminded Peter of his mission, feed my lambs. Lead the disciples. Bring them together. Jesus prayed for Peter to be restored, to be re-united with the others so that they would stay on mission.

Our unity is just as important to Jesus too. He prays,

²⁰ "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Our unity is made possible by Jesus' indwelling presence through the Spirit. The Spirit brings us together; while our sin separates us. If we are unwilling to get along with or work with another believer we are literally fighting against the Spirit and fighting against Jesus' prayer. It should shock us to think that we could be deliberately frustrating Jesus' prayers for us.

The reason why it's so important is that the unsaved will see our joy and unity together and some will come to "*believe that You have sent Me*". The majority of the world don't believe in God or that He sent Jesus to die for our sins. Some of them don't believe Jesus because they've been appalled at how Jesus' followers treat each other. People who claim to believe in Jesus sometimes argue and divide over the smallest things. Some of these leave their churches and take their grudges to another church. Some stay in the church but refuse to reconcile with others. They have lost their focus of why they are there; so that the world would know that God sent Jesus to die for our sins.

When we refuse to reconcile or get along with each other we hinder Jesus' prayers and God's purpose. So let's work at making this a prayer priority for ourselves, for our church and the churches around us and for Jesus' followers everywhere so that the unsaved can't use our disunity as an excuse not to follow Jesus.

One more significant way the resurrection affects Jesus prayers for us is seen in what Jesus wants us to see.

That We Would See His Glory **(17:24-26)**

Jesus concluded His prayer by asking His Father,

²⁴ "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

²⁵ "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Jesus finishes His prayer in the same way He started; He is praying for God to be glorified and for His followers to see His glory.

Jesus looks forward to the day when we will be with Him and see His future glory, the glory that He had before He became a human; the glory that James, Peter and John saw a glimpse of on the mountain in Matthew 17. This is how we will see Him when we have died and will be in His presence.

As strange to us as this sounds, Jesus is looking forward to our separation from this world and our coming to see the glory of His presence, heaven and ultimately the new perfect earth. While we want to see Jesus in His glory and heaven we struggle because we don't want to leave here. But that's because we haven't seen His glory yet. Think of it like this: Imagine you ask your child or

grandchild, 'Would you like to go to the toy store?' and because the only toy store they've seen is Lower Mercantile in town, which has a whole room with some cool toys, they think that's what you mean. But you tell them you're going to Toys R Us in Kingston but they don't want to because they're not convinced anything could be better than Lower Mercantile. Even when you say, oh there's lots more toys where we're going, but they are not convinced and so they go unconvinced and maybe even a little angry that you're taking them away from their toy store. When you pull into Toys R Us however, and they see the size of the store – all full of toys! - they can't get over how many toys there are. And of course when it's time to go they don't want to go. And the next time you say 'Do you want to go to a toy store' which one do you think they'll choose?

The reason why we don't have the same joy about finishing this life and going to Jesus is because we're not convinced eternity is better by far. Here's the thing though. We might leave some cool stuff behind but we can take some people we love with us if we share the gospel with them, praying that they believe in Jesus. If we work on become more eternally minded we'll be more willing to share our faith and excited about what Jesus has to offer.

And yet didn't Jesus begin His prayer talking about glorifying God with His life on earth?

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. ⁶ "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

Jesus glorified God at the cross by magnifying God's love for us. Every time someone puts their faith in Jesus, we see the glory of God at work. Every time we desire to make all that we do in life about God rather than about us, we see the glory of God now. Every time we obey God and live in unity with one another we see glimpses of God's glory here that we'll get to enjoy forever even more fully.

I pray that we have listened to Jesus pray for us so that we will know better how to pray for ourselves and each other. We know He will answer some of these prayers because of the resurrection. Jesus prayed knowing God would be glorified. Knowing the resurrection would happen assured Him He would be in God's presence where *"He lives to intercede on our behalf"* (Heb. 7:23). Jesus' prayer focuses on our spiritual maturity; protection from the enemy, filled with His joy, set apart through the Word, live in unity together and look for His glory. Can I challenge you this week to use John 17 to pray this for yourself, and for everyone on your prayer list this week (and hopefully more regularly)? And don't be surprised when God answers. After all, the tomb is empty.

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