

Father, I Desire

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Date: 27 January 2016

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[0 : 00] It's good to see everyone who has made it along. Thank you for coming. I think even the sun has appeared outside, so it is good that you're here.

And this afternoon we look then at the last in our series that we've been looking at in January in John 17. And we've entitled that series, The Lord's Prayer, where he has prayed for himself and his glory, that he would be glorified through the cross.

He has prayed for his disciples and the word that he has given them. And he's prayed that the Father would keep them and would protect them in the world as he is sending them out.

Well, this last section that we look at, verses 20 to 26, verses 20 to 26 on page 903, we see in this last section that the Lord lifts his eyes and prays for all future generations of believers.

As he is sending the disciples out with his word, then he's praying for all those who would then come to believe in that word. So we see the desires of the Lord Jesus, and that's the title, Father, I desire.

[1 : 29] And what we could say about these verses is that we see the desire of the Lord for his people. But more specifically than that, we see the desire of the Lord Jesus for your life.

And surely that is something that is worth listening to. We see that there's two requests. Verse 21, he prays that they may be one, that they may be united.

And the second request, verse 24, that they may be with me. So what they are, the fact that they are one and that they are united, and then where they are, the fact that they will be with him and will see his glory.

So let's read then John 17, verses 20 to 26. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.

Just 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 have sent me. The glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one.

[2 : 50] I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them, me and loved them even as you loved me.

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Amen. The word of the Lord. Well, we see in this section that there are three things going on. There is a past, there is a future goal, and there is a present work.

So there's a past word that has been given, there is a future glory that is anticipated, and there is a present work that believers are involved in.

[4 : 03] And we've noticed, haven't we, the transition of the word through the Lord's Prayer here, how the word has come from the Father to the Son. It's been given then to the apostles.

That's very much been the context of the upper room, that the Lord is speaking to the apostles. He's been giving them his word, and they in turn will then take that word to all who will believe.

So the origin is from the Father. You can see that in verse 8, top of the page. I've given them the words that you gave me. They have received them. And then verse 20, the apostles are going to take that word out to all generations who is going to believe.

And then here's the request. Here's the request. So those who will believe in me through their word, verse 20, verse 21, the first request, that they may be one.

That they may be one. And this is perhaps the most quoted request of the Lord in the upper room. Sometimes that's what springs into people's mind when they hear John 17, the fact of unity, and the Lord's desire for his people that they are one.

[5 : 15] And this verse can really be taken as the flagship verse of an ecumenical movement that all believers, despite our differences, despite perhaps different things that we believe, the Lord desires that we are to be one.

And that we must show that unity to be visible and that that unity must be perceived, that we stand together and be seen to do so. After all, this is the great desire of the Lord.

It could be said, I'm sure you're familiar with the line of thought that, well, matters of teaching or doctrine, they're not unimportant, but they shouldn't be allowed to somehow get in the way of unity. That's what the Lord is praying for. Well, evidently, that is not the case because that is not the context of the verse. Verse 20 comes before verse 21.

The Lord's basis for our unity, for the believers of all generations, our basis of our unity is on what we believe. Because we believe through the word of the apostles.

[6 : 25] The apostles received the word from the Lord, have handed it on to future generations, and the Lord is then praying that we would be one with that word. Because in turn, being one with the word of the apostles is in turn being one with the Lord Jesus himself.

So the context of the Lord's request is precisely bound up with what we are to believe. We are to be one as we believe through the word of the apostles, grounded in that unchanging and unchangeable word.

And that is the claim of the New Testament, that people can only come to believe through that word that is once and for all delivered. That's what Jude says when he writes and says, I was eager to write to you about our common salvation.

I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered. So there is a final handing over from generation to generation, the word that was given from the Lord to the apostles.

And that is what the apostolic succession is. It is in the words that are given. And that's how we come to believe through that word. That's the whole reason that John has written his gospel.

[7 : 49] In chapter 20, he could say that, this is why I've written these things. This is why I've recorded these things, so that you may believe.

And that's why the scriptures are so important to the Christian faith. That's why our Bible is so important, because it is the words of the apostles from the Lord and from the Father.

So as we are one with that word, we are then in turn one with the Son and with the Father. In Washington, D.C., at Arlington Cemetery, there is the tomb of the unknown soldier.

And that tomb is guarded 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. And on the hour, every hour, the guard changes.

And the guard who is leaving transitions to the one who has come. And the same words are repeated every time. And he says to the guard that comes, orders remain unchanged.

[8 : 53] Orders remain unchanged. That is the apostolic succession. That is what the Lord is praying as he has delivered his word through the apostles once and for all delivered.

That's what Jude says. Orders remain unchanged through the generation. So to be one with the word of the apostles in that unchanging word is to be one with Jesus, is to be one with the Father and the Son.

So any departure from that word, if we move to the left or the right of that word that has been given to us, then that is a departure from the one who gave the word.

And as we're speaking in the context of unity, surely that's the worst kind of disunity imaginable. To be separated from the Father and the Son because we are at odds with his word.

What a tragedy that would be. But the Lord is praying that they would be one through the word as they come to believe and that they would be then united in believing that truth.

[10 : 03] They are to be united as they follow the same message, as they serve the same Lord, and as they proclaim that same unchanging message.

So truth cannot be sacrificed for the preservation of unity. Keeping the truth is essential to keeping and preserving unity.

unity. And that's a great encouragement, isn't it, to the church or to you as an individual as you feel the scorn and the pressure of the world to shift from the word that has been delivered to the saints.

It's a great encouragement to you when you feel the pressure to conform to the world's standards and the standards of the wider church. Well, the Lord Jesus has prayed for you and prayed that you would stand unswervingly on that word, that you would come to believe and that you would so stand in it and pass it on to future generations.

So the Lord prayed in the shadow of his cross that his people would be united, that we would stand unswervingly on the truth of the apostolic word and therefore be united to him.

[11 : 22] So as we feel that pressure to shift, then the Lord is praying for us and he's praying that we stand and that we believe and that we pass that word on to others.

So we're united in that past word. Secondly, and the second request, we're united in and by future glory.

Verse 24, the second request of the Lord Jesus, Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, we've looked at that phrase in this series, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am to see my glory.

And the two requests are closely linked to unity in what we believe, being one with the Father and the Son, is then what makes that future glory a reality.

Because we believe in that unchanging word, the destination of future glory to be with the Lord and to see him in his glory is a reality and is possible because of our belief.

[12 : 31] And this request looks forward to a great consummation where the whole people of God who have been united in that past word will then be united with Christ and will see him in his glory.

So we see in effect that what the Lord Jesus is doing here is he is underlining the commission that he gives to his apostles. He is underlining that with prayer.

We've seen how he could pray that those who would receive eternal life would then be kept in it, would be protected, would be sanctified, and then would, their final destination would be secure, that they would see the Lord in his glory and that they would be with them.

So there's the great hope and there's the great security for the believer that from beginning the conception of eternal life all the way through the Christian journey to the great consummation and arrival of being with the Lord, the Lord is praying for that whole sweep and journey.

But this future hope also has an outward-looking element to it. We see twice that the Lord is thinking of the world and how the world looks on at this.

[13 : 47] He says twice in verse 21, so that the world may believe that you sent me. And then verse 23 also, so that the world may know that you sent me.

So there is an outward look to this and there is a hope and an expectation and a great vindication that the word of the apostles will be seen to be true.

It will be seen to be authoritative. And those who believe and stand on that word will be vindicated in that belief. So there's the great prospect that the world will come to know and that the world will see.

And that's what Paul is saying in Philippians, where he could say that there's a day coming where every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So the future hope demonstrates a vindication to all who hold to that apostolic word. And there's the great hope for the believer that as we see the Lord in the shadow of the cross prays that his people will be with him and we'll see him.

[15 : 03] We'll see him perfectly in his glory. I think it's almost become compulsory now at Wimbledon that the men's champion or maybe the female champion as well, what do they tend to do when they win?

I think Pat Cash was the first person to do it. And when they win, they climb the scaffold of the stadium and they clamber over seats and you know where they're going.

they're wanting to get to that box where those who are closest to them, those who have believed in them, those who have suffered along with them, they want to be with them.

They want to be with them so that they can see them in their glory, so that they can share in that moment of victory. Well, there's something in that of what, in a very pale way, of what the Lord is praying here.

Father, would you not bring those who are closest to me, those who have believed in me, those who are united in my word, would you not bring them so that they can see me in my full glory and be with me?

[16:20] It's an amazing prospect, isn't it, that there will be a great vindication for the believer who stands on the word of God, and there will be a great reward for those who hold fast to that word.

And surely, as we go back out into the world, a world that the Lord has spelt out to us in this upper room will be hostile to us and will be antagonistic towards His word.

Well, it's a great encouragement and it surely helps us to resolve our will to stand on that word. It strengthens the body and energizes our mind.

So, we've seen that the believers are united in a past word that is given. They are united by a future glory. And then we see also that they are united in a present work.

A present work. We stand then on the authority of the word that has been given in the past. Our future hope is to see the Lord in His glory, but for us that day has not yet come.

[17:29] We are between the two comings of the Lord. The word has been given. The glory is future. But we are in the middle and we have a work to do.

And our work presently is to then pass on that unchanging message to others. As verse 20 says, so that those who believe in me through that word that has been given.

And it's a little like the illustration that we gave earlier of the guard at the cenotaph at the tomb where he could say that orders remain unchanged. There's that unchanging succession that gets handed on to the next generation.

But the great comfort is that we are not alone in that work. we are not alone in it. The responsibility for that succession does not fall to you.

It does not fall to me in all our weakness and frailty. But the Lord himself is superintending that work. Verse 26, he could say what he has done and what he will do.

[18:37] Verse 26, I made known to them your name and I will continue to make it known. I will continue to make my name known through that word that has been given.

So we are not alone. The responsibility doesn't fall to us. And that's a great encouragement to us but when we see the resource that we have, when we see the promise of the Lord Jesus that he will continue to make his name known through that word, then surely that should energize us.

It should give us great energy to go out into the world with that word so that future generations will come to believe through that very word.

So every time the word is preached, every time the scriptures is open and seeking to extol the name of the Lord Jesus and show him in his great work of salvation, then the Lord himself is making his name known through that word and he's praying that that would be the case.

Every time we sit around a Bible study, every time we host a Christianity Explored and try and explain the message of the gospel to others or even if we just try and say a few stumbling words about the Lord Jesus over the garden fence to our neighbor, then the Lord himself has promised that he will use that word and he will make his name known.

[20:13] So that's a great comfort to us that it's not our turn of phrase, it's not our understanding that will make his name known, but it will be the Lord himself.

And when we have such a promise and such a resource that should fire us to give our all to make that word known and make his great name known to the nations and to future generations.

So we've seen here this request of unity for the church. Unity is based on what we believe. So as we are one with the apostolic word, so in turn we are one with the Lord and one with the Father.

The Lord is praying that his people may be one, but we've seen that we can't just take that verse out of context and make that unity whatever we want it to be. We can't ignore the word that has been given for that is the very foundation of our unity.

We've seen that we are united in that past word that has been given. We are united then in our future goal and future glory, that we will be with the Lord and that we will see him as he is.

[21:31] And then we've seen that we are united then in this present work and making his name known through his word. So we've, over these January sessions, we've dipped our toe in the water of John 17, the great prayer of the Lord Jesus, how he could pray for himself and that he would be glorified through the cross.

We've seen his request for his disciples that he would keep them and that he would preserve them.

And then we've seen the succession of that word and how we now are in the middle of those two events, the word that has been given and the future glory.

And we have a present work to do and we have to make his name known through his word. And the message then is resoundingly clear for us that, well, what does Jesus want for our life?

What is his greatest desires that he prays for in the shadow of the cross? then he wants us to stand resolutely and unswervingly on the apostolic word that has been given to pass that word on to others and through that word many would come to believe and there would be a great number that would gather on that glorious prospect where we will be with him and we will see him in his glory. Father, we do thank you for your word, our prayer would be that we would be people who would stand unswervingly on it, looking back to the past and anticipating the future glory and busy in the present working to pass that word on to others.

[23 : 15] And so we pray that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit would be with us all now and evermore.

Amen. Amen.