

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

John 17

Only a casual reading of the gospels will impress one that a large part of the earthly life of our Lord must have been given to prayer and meditation. To Him prayer was not merely formality nor perfunctory performance. It was a most vital and real experience.

1. Jesus Christ prayed in secret.

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Mark 1:35.

"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Luke 6:12.

2. Jesus Christ prayed in public.

"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Matthew 26:26. "And it came to pass that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Luke 11:1. "And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." Matthew 14:19.

3. Jesus Christ prayed for Himself.

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." John 17:1. This is the only petition that He has for Himself. The hour was important. "Father, the hour is come," that hour which had been the goal in the heart of God from all eternity. That hour when God's love was to go forth in the bloody sacrifice. Jesus prayed for God's glory--"that thy Son also may glorify thee." When you pray, have you God's glory in mind? When you ask for health, do you have in mind the thought of glorifying God in your body? When you ask for success, do you have God's glory in mind? When you pray for your children, do you have God's glory in mind?

4. Jesus Christ prayed for His disciples. John 17:6-19.

(1) For their security.

"Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me" (John 17:11).

(2) For their sanctification.

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:17-19).

5. Jesus Christ prayed for all who would ever believe in Him.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21).

6. Jesus Christ prayed for the perfection of all believers.

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." John 17:23.

7. Jesus Christ prayed for their final union with Him in heaven.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (John 17:24).

We bring glory to God when we love Christ enough to obey His commandments and follow His example in intercessory prayer. Concerning His own He said, "I am glorified in them" (John 17:10). To glorify Christ in our lives is to extol, honor, praise, magnify in worship and render homage to Him. It is to do all for His glory. For this the flower blooms, the bird warbles and the river murmurs. The chief end of man is to glorify his Master. The purpose of the Christian is to glorify Christ.

Why should we glorify Christ in our lives? We should glorify Christ because of Who He is -- He is the Son of God, the Saviour of men, the one adequate hope for life and of salvation for eternity, the perfect ideal of humility, the paragon of purity, the personification of perfection, the One Who will stand the test of transplantation, the one balm of the universal heart, the one adequate hope for humanity and the one sufficient remedy for every ill. We should glorify Christ because of what He has done -- He died for us, He saved us, He gave us an example and He promised to shape our future lives, impart strength and supply our needs. Glorifying Christ promotes holiness, happiness and usefulness.

How to glorify Christ in our lives? We glorify Christ by keeping God's Word. "I have given them thy word" (John 17:14). We glorify Christ by preserving the spiritual unity of the church. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11). "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). We glorify Christ by living unworldly lives. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:15-16). We glorify Christ by godly living. We glorify Christ by giving back to Him in unselfish service the gifts He gave us. Whatever talents we have should be cultivated, trained and used in service for His glory. We glorify Christ by winning the lost to Christ day by day. Since each of us has one life only to live on the earth, we ought to make it count for the most possible for our Lord.