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The Perfect Gifts

John 17:2-3

Intro: We began our study of **ch17** last week by noticing that this chapter contains the real Lord's Prayer, the High Priestly prayer of Jesus Christ. Whereas in **Mt 6:9-13**, Jesus taught the disciples how they should pray, **ch17** gives us a glimpse into how Jesus prays. As we noticed last week, it's quite unnecessary for the omniscient members of the Godhead to communicate verbally with each other for the purposes of gathering and dispensing information. They all already know everything so what is there left to say? But, during His entire earthly ministry, Jesus spent a great deal of time in prayer to the Father. It could have something to do with His setting aside His external glory when He came to earth but I believe the major reason for His extensive prayer life was to serve as an example for all His disciples.

Thus, we have this prayer in **ch17** that not only serves to grant us a glimpse into how Jesus prays but, even more importantly, it shows us what particular subjects concern Him enough to spend so much time in prayer about with His Father. In short, this prayer shows us His heart – it shows us the things that are foremost on His mind in the few hours before He is arrested, tried, tortured and cruelly executed. As we've seen, Jesus prays briefly for Himself and then spends the remainder of the prayer making petition for His disciples, both current and future.

The first part of His prayer (**1-5**) is a petition for Himself but it's not a selfish prayer. His overriding concern is for the glory of the Father but Jesus can only glorify the Father if the Father firsts answers His prayer for Him to Glorify Your Son. How was Jesus to be glorified? By going to the cross! The cross would glorify Jesus because it would reveal the wisdom and power of God. The cross would also glorify the Father because it would reveal both His wise plan of salvation and His great sacrifice in giving His only begotten Son to do such a work of redemption for lost humanity.

This seems counter-intuitive to man. From the world's perspective, the cross was utter humiliation – the ultimate expression of contempt from the perpetrators to the victims. You could never find a lower, more painful way to

show your dislike of someone than crucifixion. But, despite the world's opinion of it, the cross was an instrument of glorification in God's eyes. When Jesus petitioned the Father to glorify Him, He was literally praying for the cross! This should instruct all who follow in His footsteps for the motivation of Jesus' prayers should be ours as well. When you ask for a blessing from God, do you ask for it with the intent of bringing glory to God with it or through it? If your prayer is for better health, do you ask for it so you may spend it for God's glory? When you pray for financial or physical blessing, is it to advance His kingdom? If the motive of your prayers is God's glory, they will be answered.

Today, we'll look again at Jesus' first petition and uncover some of the theological jewels hidden there (2-3). Our text mentions 3 specific gifts that were given by God: 2 were from the Father to Jesus and 1 was from Jesus to humanity.

2- Does anyone here ever have difficulty finding just the right gift for someone, especially if that person already seems to have everything they need? There's a lot of consternation in buying a gift for someone else. What if you give a special bottle of expensive shampoo to a guy and then learn that he wears a toupee! Or you buy a baby gift for a woman and then find out she's not pregnant! There are a thousand ways to get it wrong; that's why people struggle so much when buying gifts. Well, at least we can say God didn't have that problem when He was considering the first of these 2 great gifts He gave to Jesus. Really, what do you give someone who has everything?

What could be more appropriate for the Father to give Jesus than a people who would be *conformed* to His image and be His brothers and sisters for all eternity? A mansion wouldn't be appropriate; all the mansions in heaven already belong to Him and will be prepared by Him for those who trust in Him. A universe wouldn't be appropriate; He participated in making this one and could make a billion more any time He wanted. Nothing we can imagine would be a more appropriate gift to the Lord of glory than a people of His own—a people who had been created in His image, had fallen into sin but are now redeemed by Jesus and called to Him in faith by the Holy Spirit's power.

This wasn't just an appropriate gift for Jesus; it was a satisfying gift too. It's

often recorded in Scripture the Christ takes joy in or rejoices over His people. **Isa 53** is one chapter in the OT that clearly spells out the suffering and death of Jesus for His own. In vs**10-11** it says that Jesus will look on the fruit (result) of His suffering and be satisfied. His satisfaction was in knowing that His death would secure salvation for multitudes of those who come to Him in faith. The theme of His satisfaction is also found in the NT (**Heb 12:2**). In what aspect of the cross did Jesus find joy? He found joy in the knowledge that by His death He would secure salvation for all whom the Father had given Him.

Thus, not only was this gift appropriate and satisfying, it was also comforting. This promise of a body of people who are given to Him by the Father and would surely be saved by His suffering was a comfort to Jesus just prior to His death because the phrase “who You have given Me” appears 7 times in this final prayer (with some variations). The cross would be no easy task for Jesus, especially since, on it, He would be made sin for us and this would involve a very real, though temporary, separation from the Father. In the midst of this difficult trial, Jesus received comfort in knowing that His suffering would result in the salvation of His people. His death was to provide the judicial basis on which all those who had already been given to Him should come.

There could be no greater, more appropriate, more satisfying and comforting gift for Jesus than this – the gift of the church to the One who would die for it. If you have believed on and accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior then you are one who was given to Him before the foundation of the world and one of those who He was thinking about and receiving comfort from before He died. That should bring a certain measure of comfort to each believer here today.

The second gift the Father gives to Jesus is authority. It's authority over all flesh to do with it as He wills. This is a great authority for it is the basis on which He can give eternal life to all whom God has given Him. The 1st thing we notice about this authority is its scope over all flesh – this means everyone who has ever lived or will ever live. No one is excepted from the scope of the authority of Jesus Christ. Thus, He may do with them as He wishes for He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

But, this doesn't mean that it is only men and women, past, present and

future who are under His authority. It applies to all angels and demons and any other celestial beings, all those in heaven and hell too ([Phil 2:9-11](#)). There are 3 distinct categories of intelligent beings mentioned here: those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth. This refers to angels (who dwell with God), humans (who dwell upon earth), and fallen angels or demons (who were cast out of heaven and will one day inhabit hell). There are 2 different kinds of acknowledgment, too. The holy angels and those redeemed from among lost humanity will acknowledge Christ gladly. They will rejoice to confess Him as Lord. Fallen angels and unbelieving humanity will not acknowledge Him gladly. But they will acknowledge Him; they'll be forced to this by the sheer fact of His triumph. However the acknowledgment is made, willingly or reluctantly (with hatred), it will be made and the full scope of the authority of Jesus Christ will be seen and vindicated.

What is the only appropriate response to the authority of Jesus? Accept it willingly and with joy! Of course, you still have the option of acknowledging His authority over you grudgingly and with hatred but I'll warn you that it won't end well for any who choose this option. If you refuse to believe on and love Jesus while you're on this earth, you won't do it on that great day when you are called to stand before His throne and answer for yourself with everyone else.

The 2nd aspect of the authority given to Jesus is its depth. It's not just that Jesus has been granted authority over all people but over all flesh - which is the most unruly, disobedient, obstinate, noncompliant, stubborn thing in the universe. In common English usage, "flesh" almost exclusively refers to the fleshy parts of the body but that's not what it means in the Bible. It can mean that but generally it refers to the entire person – body, soul and spirit – which is constantly motivated by a fallen nature. It's the whole of man's being that's dominated by a depraved sin nature.

Think of it as an airplane flying at 35,000 ft. The pilot is the soul, the fuselage is the body and the thrust from the engines is the spirit. In that instance, each part of the airplane is good and functioning as the designer intended it to. But, if the engines fail, the whole plane is in trouble. The fuselage, which was a great asset when the engines were running, becomes an extreme liability and will soon draw the plane to destruction. To be fleshly in the biblical sense means to be dominated by the body without

the ongoing thrust of the spirit. It's being dominated by the old nature. This is a terrible position to be in and it's one that every human who's ever lived has experienced intimately.

This truth helps us appreciate something of the depth of the authority Jesus has over all flesh. The point isn't just that Jesus has authority over all intelligent beings (He does) but also that He has authority even over that stubborn and rebellious nature that now so totally dominates humanity. And it's good that He does, for if He didn't have the authority over humanity to turn them from their path of rebellion and quicken their dead spirit to respond to Him in faith, they would never believe. They'd be under God's condemnation and would perish in their sin. But by His grace Jesus turns men and women to Himself, as He has done countless times before to so many others.

This leads to the 3rd gift mentioned in the text. We're told that Jesus has been given authority over all so that He can, in a specific way, give eternal life to as many as God has given Him. We should understand an important distinction that is being made here. Yes, the authority Jesus has been given is universal – it can't possibly be any greater either in scope or in depth. But, we need to understand is that the exercise of that authority in the area of salvation is very specific. It's shown in the giving of eternal life to those and only to those whom the Father has given to Him. It's only for those who repent and turn to Jesus for salvation. The authority of Jesus is universal but the exercise of that authority in giving eternal life is very specific but, what is eternal life?

3- There are several different ways used in Scripture to refer to salvation or becoming in a right relationship with God. Paul talks about being "in Christ", John talks about believing on Jesus. You can also look at it as a diverging of wills: man's will in rebellion against God's will and how Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, brings man's will back in line with God's. The rebellion of our wills against God's is sin while salvation is God establishing His perfect and holy will in us by which we are drawn to Jesus and begin to seek after holiness. In our text, John gives us another set of terms for salvation. Knowledge of God is salvation while not knowing God (and not wanting to) is sin.

Having said that, we must now be careful to define exactly what kind of

knowledge equates to salvation. There are several types of knowledge that don't fit what Jesus is saying here. Not only do they not equate to salvation, the Bible actually uses them to explain why men are in fact guilty in not coming to God for salvation.

The first type of knowing that's inadequate would simply be awareness. The US is governed by a president and a congress and both are headquartered in D.C. Not a very profound or detailed knowledge, something a child would learn in school. [Rom 1:19-20](#) talks about this type of knowledge when it says creation reveals God's power and Godhead. It's a rudimentary kind of knowledge – its awareness only, but it does make us responsible.

Another type of knowledge involves information. A theologian will know a lot more information about God than a child in kindergarten but that doesn't necessarily mean the theologian is saved. Another kind of knowing is by experience. Some people try to experience God in nature and many have experienced something very profound and moving. But, no matter how moving it is, it's still not the knowledge leading to salvation Jesus is referring to here.

What is this knowledge? It's nothing less than a personal encounter with God in which, because of His holiness, we become aware of both our own sin and our great personal need and then, by His grace, turn to Jesus as our Savior. Of course, all of this depends on us knowing the true God as opposed to a false or an imaginary God. Who is this true God? What is the effect on fallen humanity when they come to know Him? To answer these questions, let's look in the OT and see what happened when the true God revealed Himself to Moses for the first time.

Moses was surely aware of the true God before this time. He'd been born into a godly home. He'd certainly heard of God's calling of Abraham and His dealings with him and the other patriarchs. He even believed in God's promises to deliver the Hebrew people from their Egyptian bondage because he presented himself as the means of that deliverance by killing an Egyptian. Still, it's likely true that Moses had never had a personal encounter with God in any full sense of the term until God revealed himself to him in the burning bush on Mount Sinai. Moses was minding his own business on the back side of the desert when he happened to notice a bush was burning. This was unusual but not miraculous. What was miraculous was that

the bush wasn't burned up! So, he had to check that out but when he got closer, God spoke to him from within the burning bush (Ex 3:4-5).

The first thing God revealed about Himself to Moses was His holiness. Even the ground was holy because of God's presence. Holiness is the first and most important thing lost individuals need to learn about the true God. Along with this truth, they also need to learn that sin bars their access to God, something Moses was instantly aware of (v6). Has it ever disturbed you to consider that one day you will stand before and have to deal with a God that has never sinned, that can't tolerate sin in any form and must judge it? If you don't know God that way then you don't know the 1st thing about God. You also don't know anything about the depths of your own sin and greatness of God's grace.

The 2nd thing God revealed to Moses about Himself was His omniscience. When Moses hid his face, God started talking about what He had seen and heard concerning the condition of the Hebrews in Egypt (7-9). "I have seen. . . . I have heard. . . . I know," and "I have come"—the words God uses speak of omniscience. God also revealed that He knew all about Moses too (strengths and weaknesses) and about what was coming. God foretold all the difficulties Moses would have with Pharaoh; that he would refuse Moses' demands and strongly resist them. In fact, he would only let go after God had performed many wonders in and upon the nation of Egypt.

God also revealed His sovereignty to Moses. This lesson was extremely personal too. God demanded that Moses return to Egypt with His message to Pharaoh: "Let my people go." Moses didn't want to do it. He was like the rest of us who do not want to do anything difficult and who are usually content only when God blesses us while allowing us to do nothing. Moses made excuses, but they were not valid. He asked for signs; God provided them. Finally, God intensified the tone of His orders and Moses, who eventually ran out of excuses, surrendered and went. Whose will would you rather see done in the universe: God's or yours? Clearly, God's will is better because His knowledge and power are perfect. So why do we constantly resist His will? Why do we insist on fighting Him at every turn?

The real problem with the knowledge of the true God is not that God has not revealed Himself enough or that we don't have the physical ability to seek after Him for salvation. The problem is we don't want to do this and the

reason we don't is that we find the true God, who is there to be known, threatening. His holiness is threatening. His omniscience is threatening. His sovereignty is threatening. All that can be known of God is threatening, profoundly so when we are still in our sins, but also sometimes even after God has brought us to faith in Himself through Jesus. 😊