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## A Prayer for His Own John 17:6-8

**Intro:** We have been looking at the Lord's High-priestly prayer in ch17 and have considered the 1<sup>st</sup> part of the prayer, namely: a petition for Himself – that Jesus might be glorified for the express purpose that the Father might also be glorified in Him. Now we turn to the main part of the prayer, a section that is concerned with the disciples. These men had, for the last several years, depended quite heavily on the physical presence of Jesus, a presence that was about to be taken from them. Even though Jesus has already promised that the Holy Spirit would come to them and even though He's assured them that this will be far better than His continuing bodily presence, He still knows that the next few hours will be a tremendous shock to them. Despite everything they have been told, the disciples were not ready for the stunning impact of Calvary. So Jesus now tenderly commits them to the care of their heavenly Father (6-19).

**6-** Just as the 1<sup>st</sup> part of His prayer revealed something about Jesus, so to, this 2<sup>nd</sup> section reveals something about the disciples. This verse actually tells us 4 things about them: 1) they were God's. 2) God has given them to Jesus. 3) Jesus has made God known to them. 4) They received (kept) that revelation. The importance of this sequence is that it's repeated in everyone who ever comes to Jesus. 1<sup>st</sup>, we're God's; meaning He can do what He wants with us. 2<sup>nd</sup>, we're given to Jesus. 3<sup>rd</sup>, the gospel is made known to us by the Holy Spirit. Finally, we receive this teaching. It's not by accident that our response comes last in the sequence; it's by design.

1) Jesus says the disciples were originally God's. In one sense, everything that exists is God's because He made everything originally and can do with it as He pleases. God's right of possession doesn't only extend to the material world but it extends to the realm of individuals as well. Human events are ordered by Him and the individual destinies of humanity are also controlled. Every person and thing is in God's hands and He can do what He wants with them.

But, besides God's general possession of all things, there's also a possession by God that's more specific. It's a possession of a holy people, who are His in this special way solely because of He has chosen to save

them.

Some people get nervous when you start talking about election and predestination but you needn't be worried because election and free will are not mutually exclusive; they're 2 sides of the same coin. Election relates to salvation from God's perspective; free will relates to salvation from man's perspective. They are part and parcel of the same thing. In fact, we'll see both perspectives in our text today. But, the idea that we are possessed by God is presented by Paul in [Rom 8:29-30](#). It's this possession of His own by God that Jesus is speaking of here. This possession anchors our salvation in God's great purposes and possession, not in our fickle whims and choices.

2) Those who were the Father's in this special sense were then given to Jesus and they became His possession too!

We have previously mentioned that this particular truth must have brought great comfort to Jesus, especially in His final hours, because He mentions it in this prayer at least 7 times. Why did He find this truth so comforting? Just look at His ministry: Jesus came into the world as the world's light. He was filled with the fullness of God's character. He was sinless, gracious and as loving as anyone could ever be but He wasn't loved for it. Instead, He was hated. He was about to be crucified. In fact, at His arrest, even these close friends who were now with Him would be scattered.

There was a bright point amidst all this disappointment – the truth that, despite all appearances, these disciples and a multitude of others who would follow them in faith had been given to Jesus by the Father. Because it's the Father who is giving them to Jesus, He knows they will definitely come to Him in faith, will be kept by His power as they live for Him on this earth and will eventually be united with him forever in glory. The knowledge of this truth gave Jesus the proper perspective as He conducted His earthly ministry. He wasn't swayed when the massive crowds began to follow Him nor was He swayed when they stopped following Him. He was confronting the sin-enslaved wills of lost humanity and He knew that nothing could possibly change them apart from God's power and purpose in their lives.

So, as Jesus went around preaching in Israel, He was only concerned to conduct His ministry as the Father has instructed Him to do it, all the while looking out for those individuals that the Father had given Him and

expecting them to come to Him. Did they come? A few did. He had 11 with Him now and there were a few others who had been moved by His preaching and believed. There weren't very many but these were the Father's gift to Him, however few there were. But, there would soon be others. Jesus rejoiced in these and thanked the Father for them.

If this truth was a comfort and encouragement to Jesus throughout the difficulties of His earthly ministry, should it not be even more so for us? Does God still have individuals out there that He has chosen to give to Jesus? Of course He does! As I said last time, that's why we're still here. This truth should be a great comfort and encouragement to all God's people today, despite all appearances. But, what should we do with this truth? Exactly what Jesus did – pray for those that God is calling, look for them in every area of life and expect them to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

3) Jesus manifested the name of God to them. We shouldn't think (from our first 2 points) that salvation operates in a mechanical way. Although Jesus does refer to God's activity in giving believers to Him; He also speaks of His own personal activity of making the Father known to those who would believe. The next step in the sequence of God's application of salvation to the disciples is the fact that Jesus literally made the name of God known to them.

"The name of God" is a Semitic phrase that refers to speaking about God's attributes. To make the name known is to reveal the God who possesses those attributes. Theologically speaking, Jesus is saying He revealed the God of the great biblical names to His disciples. Elohim ([Gen 1:1](#)) speaks of God as Creator. Jesus told the disciples about this aspect of God's nature. Jehovah – (various meanings) mainly used to convey God's character as Redeemer. Jesus revealed this and all God's other names: El Elyon, Jehovah Jireh, Jehovah Sabaoth.

But, this approach to God's names is not the whole story. If we look at the matter historically and ask, "What unique name of God was revealed by Jesus?" that name would have to be "Father." Of course, 2000 yrs later, we don't really appreciate how unique this name was. Scholars tell us 3 indisputable facts about this name: 1) using "Father" as a designation for God was new with Jesus; 2) Jesus always used this term when praying; 3) Jesus authorized the disciples to use the same word. There are a couple of

OT verses that refer to God as being like a Father or as being the Father of Israel but nowhere, either in the OT or any other document prior to the time of Jesus, does any individual Israelite ever address God directly as “my Father.”

Yet this is what Jesus always does. He always called God “Father,” and this must have impressed itself on the disciples to such a degree that they preserved it in their records of Christ’s speech and prayers. Not only do all 4 Gospels record Jesus using this address, they also report that He did so in all his prayers. The only exception is one that actually enforces the importance of the title. It’s Jesus’ cry from the cross “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” It was pronounced at the very moment when Jesus was made sin for us and the fellowship which He had previously enjoyed with the Father for all of eternity past was temporarily broken.

Jesus used this title to show that he was the Son of God in a unique sense. But, He then revealed that it can be used by those who become sons of God (in a lesser sense) by their union with Him. Is this important? Yes, for it means that while God is the great, high, exalted, eternal, self-sufficient, self-existent God, He is at the same time and in equal measure the Father of all who believe. We don’t have to come to Him with a prayer that says, “O high, exalted and self-existent God, far from us in your majesty, unreachable and unknowable.” While all that’s true of our God, we have been given the right to come to Him with that warm and personal prayer that begins with, “My Father. . . .”

Is God your Father? If so, He’ll be a Father to you in your spiritual infancy and He will teach you to walk. God sets our way before us and helps us in it. If God is your Father then He’ll take care of you. A father is responsible for the care of his children. God accepts this responsibility. You need never fear that the great God of the universe, who owns and controls all things, will ever let you down, disappoint you or turn His back on you. If God is your Father, He will preserve you to the end and will allow nothing to change your relationship to Him. You may fail Him. You may be unworthy of your high calling. You may try to run away from Him, as Jonah did. But He will still be your Father.

4) The disciples have received (obeyed) this word. The Greek the word for obey literally means “to pay attention to” or “observe,” like observing traffic

laws. But, observing Christ's word is just the end product of first hearing it and then understanding it to the point at which it makes a difference in our behavior. Some people have never heard that word. That's why we have missionaries, radio programs, Christian books, and other gospel communications. Some have never understood it. In fact, all fail to understand it unless the Holy Spirit makes it comprehensible to them. That's why we pray as we give out the message; we know that our efforts are wasted unless God intervenes to do this miracle. But, there must also be the keeping of Christ's words, involving commitment and change. This was true of the disciples. It must also be true of us and of everyone who would follow Jesus.

**7-8-** This is another sequence of actions similar to what we saw in **vs6**. The difference is that in **vs6**, Jesus presents salvation from God's point of view, stressing His acts, while in **vs8** He presents salvation from the disciple's point of view. This sequence involves the giving of God's Word, the receiving of that Word, knowing, and believing.

1) The giving of God's Word. The Word is the only thing that's powerful enough to do what's required in the hearts of lost men and women if they're to be saved. Nothing else can do it. The Word is God's tool. It is "living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (**Heb 4:12**). Compared to this the words of men are nothing. Conversion of an individual is much more than just persuasion. If persuasion were all that's required, then our words would be sufficient and we would win the lost by argument. It's not enough. At its core, salvation is like **a** resurrection, a miracle. Clearly, only the Word of God, not our words, can accomplish that. God has declared that it's by His Word, preached and shared by His people and applied to the hearts of individuals by His Holy Spirit, that men and women will be saved. Foolishness of preaching: bringing God's Word to those who desperately need to hear it.

2) Receiving God's Word. Jesus had given them the words God had given Him and they had accepted them. It's possible to give the Word only to have it go over the head of the listener (in 1 ear and out the other). More than just hearing with the ear, there must also be a receiving of the Word so that it sinks down into the mind and becomes the foundation of our thoughts and meditations later. God must communicate with us through another's

preaching.

3) Knowledge. The Word must be given if it's to be received and it must be received if it is going to be of any use to us but knowledge also plays a role in faith for faith is a commitment to Someone we've come to know through the witnessing of another Christian. Certain convictions about Jesus must be known and accepted before one places their faith in Him. Before we commit our lives to Jesus we must be convinced that He is divine, that His teaching is true, and that He did what He said He would do, mainly in dying on the cross. He died as our substitute, bearing the penalty for our sin. If we're not convinced of these truths, our faith is not real saving faith.

Knowledge is not just important for our personal belief; it's also an important actor in our motivation for evangelism. Why do Christians share the Gospel? The conviction that the facts they testify of are true based on knowledge and reinforced by their own experiences of faith. Before the resurrection, the disciples were discouraged and hiding in fear. After Jesus rose, they were compelled to tell others? Why? They were compelled by the conviction that the resurrection actually happened and it was important that others know about it! If we share the same conviction then we should share a similar response.

4) Belief – the most important factor of all. Faith is not blind trust but it's not just knowledge either. Rather, it's a personal commitment based on that knowledge but going beyond it in the sense that, having come to know Jesus as God, the one who follows Him must also be willing to follow Him into areas where he has limited knowledge or even has doubts. Faith like this involves action. So, in the biblical sense, faith is believing God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ and then acting upon that belief.

The Gospel record accurately describes the limitations of the disciples. They thought they understood who Jesus was but their understanding was dim at best. They obviously failed to understand the meaning and necessity of His death. They failed to comprehend the scope of His ministry even after the resurrection. But, despite their weakness and failure to grasp the truth, there was strength in them. It wasn't their own strength. It was just the result of the words Jesus had planted in their hearts. His words were in them. Like a seed planted in fruitful ground, those words would sprout into the fullness of a fruitful spiritual life. They were alive, spiritually alive. Thus Jesus could

confidently say, “They have received My words, they know who I am and they have believe on Me.”

This is the experience of every believer. We may vary in understanding, courage, and many other things, but we all have one thing in common, we’ve all been touched by Jesus. We have His words and if we continue in those words we will inevitably continue to grow in the power of His life and be fruitful for Him.

It’s not enough to be given the Word, the Word must be received. It’s not enough to receive the Word, the Word must be believed. It’s not enough to just believe the Word, the Word must be acted upon in faith for salvation and it must continue to be acted upon for true discipleship to occur. It’s not enough for believers to simply know the truth, they must engage in a steady diet of Scripture and doctrine in order to get the spiritual nourishment needed for effective discipleship.

That’s how Timothy was trained for ministry according to Paul in [1 Tim 4:6](#). Its how he was discipled, trained for godliness. Training in godliness is important because orthodoxy (believing correctly) turns hypocritical apart from orthopraxy (behaving correctly). Our salvation is not obtained through godly living but it is evidenced by it.

There is a culture of physical fitness that is prominent in our society today. Some people strive for it, most other just dream about it. There’s a great need today for fitness in the church, too. But this is a spiritual fitness that is only obtained through training in godliness. It’s this training that makes us fit for God’s purposes for our lives. 😊