

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Text: **John 17:1-26**

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The Shared Purpose of the Father and the Son John 17:1-26

Introduction:

· One of the surest ways of knowing what is really in the heart of a man is to review his words as death approaches. There is a tendency to reveal the true intents and feelings of the person, stripped free of pretence.

· This is true of John 17, Christ's "High-Priestly Prayer". Christ prayed often for His disciples, but few of these prayers are recorded in Scripture. John 17 anticipates the prayer of Gethsemane, in that it is vitally involved with the will of God. But there are notable differences. Primarily, John 17 is:

- o more of a communication between equals
- o a review of the successful completion of the ministry and commission that had been adopted voluntarily by the Son to please His Father
- o a deeply moving prayer for the continued protection of the faithful believers who had gathered to Him, and who were about to be placed 'in harms' way' against a powerful enemy.

· Let us break the chapter into two major statements:

- o The Union of Father and Son.
- o The Expression of Shared Purpose, and its implications.

1. The Union of the Father and the Son (17:2, 3, 5, 7-8, 11 'one, even as We are'), 21, 22-23)

"Union" does not imply a loss of personality, or of a melding of two into an indefinable One. This is not Deism or Unitarianism. When Christ said "I and the Father are One" (Jn. 10:30), He was not denying the separate Person of His father. Note:

· Since Christ speaks to the Father as a Person, they cannot be one Person, and are revealed as separate Persons.

· There are instances of the speech of the Father in the presence of the Son (see Mat. 2:17; 17:5). Therefore, we conclude that the union between Father and Son is a union of 'essence' – that is, of attributes and essential characteristics which only God can exhibit. By this definition, the Father and Son (and the Holy Spirit) share common attributes that man cannot possess of himself, but which may be shared with man as the grace of God enables (e.g., love, 1 Jn. 4:7-14).

One of the primary characteristics of this 'essence' is will and purpose, which is expressive of God's sovereignty (See Jn. 17: 2, 4, 6-8). This chapter may be seen as a triumphant review by Christ of the success of His ministry in the execution of the Father's will, the formation of the Church, and the glorification of the Father before mankind.

2. The Expression of their Shared Purpose

2.1 Mutual glorification between Father and Son.

It is difficult for man to comprehend either the extent or the degree of God's glory, although we may be sure that He will act to preserve His glory (since it is an innate characteristic of God), and that anything

that diminishes the glory of God is abhorrent to Him. Here, the Son highlights the areas where He has acted to preserve and to extend the glory of His Father (17:4) which in turn acts to the glorification of the Son (17:1, 5). What we learn is that:

- The accomplishment of the shared purpose leads to the glorification of both the Father and the Son (17:2).
- The extension of God's glory is achieved by the obedience of the Son (17:4).
- The demonstration of mutual glorification is reflective of the eternal state within the Godhead (17:5).

2.2 Bestowal of the gift of eternal life

The 'shared purpose' to which Christ makes so much reference in Jn. 17 is, ultimately, the salvation of sinful man and the creation of a body of believers who share the experience of salvation. This is the 'redemption, the forgiveness of sins' (Col. 1:14), which unites all believers together in the 'kingdom of His beloved Son' (Col. 1:13), as part of the Son's spiritual body on earth (Col. 1:18). Eternal life as Jesus Christ defines it is:

- A gift from the Son (17:2).
- Given only to those whom the Father has given to Him as believers (17:2, 6; see also Jn. 10:27-29).
- Granted only on the basis of the believer's knowledge of the Father and the Son (17:3, 8).

2.3 Impartation of the Word of God

Paul states clearly a Divine principle of saving faith in Rom. 10:17, "so faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word of Christ". The shared purpose of the Father and the Son includes the transmission to mankind of a comprehensive revelation of the truth of God in the Word of God. This is the reason for the high regard that should be applied to Scripture – it is 'inspired by God' (2 Tim. 3:16, "God-breathed"). The emphasis on this function of Christ's ministry in Jn. 17 indicates its importance:

- The revelation of the 'name' of God to faithful men (17:6, 14; see Jn. 14:9-14 "He who has seen Me has seen the Father).
- The understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son (17:7-8, and note the importance of 'received', 'understood', and 'believed' as part of the growth of faith.
- The grand vision of the coming church (17:20).

2.4 Preservation of Believers in the Truth (17:12-16)

These verses grant to us a glimpse of the spiritual conflicts that were associated with Christ's ministry, and also that were to continue in the church when the Son returned to glory. In principle, the Father is sovereign, and He will protect and sustain the believers; however, the world and its inimical forces will always act in opposition to the 'shared purpose' of God. Therefore, the believer must be under the care of a loving God at all times.

- The Standard of Care. Note the recurrence of *tayreoh* ("to keep, preserve, protect") in 17:11-15
 - o 17:11 - "keep", an imperative instruction for the Father to continue His preserving activity.
 - o 17:12 - "keeping", an imperfect, implying that Christ 'was continually protecting' His people during His ministry; as examples, see Mt. 16:23; Lk. 22:31 for the care afforded to Peter.
 - o 17:15 - "keep", an aorist subjunctive form, implying that Christ is praying for the continuity of past care into the future.
 - o 17:12 - "guarded" – from *phullassoh* ("to keep under guard, as in a prison").
- The Purpose of Preservation. Protection from the 'evil one' (*ponayros*, a term for personified evil that implies the Devil (Mt. 6:13).
- The Result of Preservation – holiness (17:19, "sanctify them in the truth"). The most powerful defence for preservation of the believer is the capacity through the Holy Spirit to exemplify by personal behaviour the Person of Christ Himself (1 Pet. 1:12-16). The means of growth in this holiness is "Thy word" (see Jn. 15:3 and I Thes. 1:8-10).

2.5 Extension of God's Care

The latter part of the chapter takes us from the present situation in which Christ prayed, and transports us to the fulfillment of His 'shared purpose':

- **The Future of the Faith (17:20). God's will is the salvation of many more people throughout history.**
- **The Sharing of the Divine Purpose (17:21-23), particularly as a basis for evangelism.**
- **The Prospect of Faith:**
 - o **Union of the believer with the Father and the Son (17:11 and 17:22-23). This is not to suggest that man becomes God; rather, it is to identify the new relationship that God has established to allow man to participate in the revelation of God's and purpose ("so that the world may know that you sent Me") and God's love ("and loved them, even as You have loved Me")**
 - o **Union of the believer with each other believer (17:21 and 23, "that they may all be one", "that they may be perfected in unity"; see also Col. 1:13)**
 - o **Sharing in the Son's glory (17:24, see also Col. 3:3-4)**
 - o **Sharing in the love of the father and the Son (17:26; see also Eph. 3:15-19).**

Conclusion: History may judge the success of Christ's ministry by numbers of adherents, political triumphs, or by social standards of justice. He Himself judges His ministry by His success in the 'shared purpose' that He had with His father, and by His ability to offer to sinful, repentant mankind the gift of salvation by faith through grace.