

THE GREATEST PRAYER

by Rev. G. Grant Verdoold

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Introduction:

Jesus is our great High Priest. ¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4: 14 - 16. As our High Priest Jesus prayed for us, and taught us to pray. HE really knew how to pray. HIS whole ministry did not just include prayer, HIS whole ministry was the act of prayer!

My friends, I could hardly wait to share this marvelous message with you today! We have a really fantastic passage before us today! Jesus' priestly prayer! This prayer is the greatest prayer ever prayed!! There are 650 prayers in the bible, but here we meet Jesus our great High Priest. "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Hebrews 2: 17.

The TEXT:

¹ Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ² as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴ I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. ⁶ "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours. You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷ Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. ⁸ For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them* and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. ⁹ "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. ¹⁰ And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as *We are*. ¹² While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 17: 1 - 17

The HOOK:

Verse 17 Launches us into the very nature of GOD, as well as the essence of HIS love for us and the significance of what salvation really means eternally!!

Our LORD Jesus prayed much for HIS people while HE was here on earth. HE made Peter the special subject of HIS intercession when HE knew HE was in extraordinary danger. The midnight wrestlings of The SON of Man were for HIS people. This was so true!!

After celebrating Passover, establishing The LORD's table, and making all kinds of incredible promises contained in John Chapters 13-16, which importantly lead us into John 17:17. On the night that HE was betrayed, HE prays to The Father that The Father will fulfil all the promises that HE prayed.

HE was not again to instruct the multitudes, and in the time remaining our LORD and Saviour prepared Himself for special intercession.

Jesus poured out HIS soul in life before HE poured out HIS life in death. I want you to hear this!! HE poured out HIS soul in life before HE poured it out in death.

Before HE was set apart for HIS life, work by the descent of The Holy Spirit came upon HIM and HE was about HIS Father's business. "And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'" Luke 3: 22.

Before HE suffered at the hands of cruel men, HE had a baptism to be baptized with, before HE actually died, HE was covered with a bloody sweat and "Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.'" Matthew 26:38

Finally, HE bled and died, and HE made intercession for us. "" Romans 8: 34. Do you ever, in 2020, think about the intercession HE made for us?

Christ Jesus never tarries when the good of HIS people calls out for HIM. Oh beloved, what a friend we have in Jesus, so wonderful, so willing, so great a heart! What a Saviour we have!

Here in Gethsemane we are admitted to that place where The Only Begotten SON of GOD speaks with The Father in the closest fellowship of love.

Here we look into the heart of Jesus, as HE sets out, in order, HIS desires and requests before HIS Father on our behalf. Here inspiration lifts her veil, and we behold Truth face to face. ("For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known." 1 Corinthians 13: 12). This is amazing! Sublime! The Saviour talking to HIS Father!

Our text lies somewhere in the middle of the prayer. It is the heart of it!!

Our Lord's desire for the sanctification of HIS people pervades the whole prayer, but it is gathered up, declared and intensified in the one sentence, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 17: 17.

The place where we have come is holy ground!! For GOD is holy!!! Jesus is holy!! The subject demands our best thought! Come Holy Spirit and teach us this morning!

Some people pray by the yard, but prayer is measured by weight and not by length.

I have just 2 points for you today. What Jesus asked for, and For Whom the prayer was offered.

The BOOK 1: What did Jesus ask?

What is the inestimable blessing which our Saviour so earnestly requests from The Father's hand? HE prays, "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are."" John 17: 11. And again HE prays, "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one." John 17: 15. This is also what we ask in The LORD's Prayer, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Matthew 6: 13.

Then Jesus cries, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 17: 17.

The word “sanctify” means “to hallow”, or “to consecrate”. To sanctify something is to set it aside for GOD.

All of the vessels used in the temple worship were to be sanctified. They were not to be used for any other purpose than the worship of GOD. They were never to be used for personal purposes once dedicated and sanctified to GOD.

The great blasphemy of Belteshazzar was that he took the vessels that his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple that had been sanctified, consecrated, and set apart for holy purposes, and drank wine out of them as he praised the idols of gold and silver! We all know what happened then! The hand of GOD wrote the warning on the wall! This was the beginning of the fall of Babylon! Blatant sinfulness, pride and mocking GOD brought on the destruction of the mighty empire!

The Greek word translated “sanctify” comes from the root word “hagios” which means “holy”. The idea here being to be set apart and holy unto GOD! That is what we are intended to be!

Jesus declared that the disciples were not of this world! Now HE is praying that they might be set aside FROM this world! John 17: 17.

Jesus prayed that the disciples would be dedicated by GOD to the service of GOD! Our LORD’s sanctification was HIS consecration to the fulfillment of the divine purposes of GOD! HIS love, HIS desire, and HIS passion were HIS absorption in the holy will of The Father! “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” John 5: 30.

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” John 6: 38

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” John 14: 21

In this sense our interceding LORD asks that all HIS people may, by The Father, be consecrated or set apart for holy service. Did you know that you have been set apart for the divine purpose of GOD? This is not a suggestion! This is a fact! Each and every single one of us has been consecrated unto The LORD and designated for a divine purpose? WHY?

WHY? We are not of this world! We do not belong to it! We do not belong to Satan! We are not our own! “For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” 1 Corinthians 6:20! We belong to The ONE who paid the price! We belong to Jesus, and HE presents us to HIS Father and begs HIM to accept us and sanctify (set us apart) for HIS holy and divine purposes! This is an awesome and wonderful purpose!

It should be our prayer and plea, to be sanctified and consecrated wholly to GOD! This should be our heart-cry! This has been my prayer all week, “Father, sanctify me to YOUR service and YOUR will! Consecrate me for the divine purpose which YOU have chosen!” “And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Revelation 17: 14, We should be wearing those robes of righteousness!! “To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.” Isaiah 61: 3. We should be adorned in the garments of praise!!! We are the trees of HIS righteousness!!

“And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” Revelation 19: 16. Do not forget we are servants of The KING of Kings!

We have the compassionate great High Priest! “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.” Hebrews 4:14

We have The Great Shepherd. “**1** Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a

robber. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." ⁶ Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them." John 10: 1-6. And we are sheep of HIS pasture! "Know that the Lord, He *is* God; *It is* He *who* has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture." Psalm 100: 3

If anyone asks, "To whom do you belong?", your answer should be an unfaltering, "I belong to Jesus!" When someone asks, "What is your occupation?", reply "I fear GOD!". That is my whole occupation! I fear GOD! That was Jonah's reply. "So, he said to them, "I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*."" Jonah 1:9

The church is to be set apart for GOD!! The church, that's us, is to be a chaste virgin wholly set apart for The LORD Jesus Christ!! Sadly, virginity is no longer prized today, It is no longer respected as something of value, but GOD says, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Corinthians 11: 2.

Jesus is the head of the church! (see Post Notes), and HE said, "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." John 17: 16. HE is speaking here of spiritual chastity. We are to be pure and dedicated to only HIM. "that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5: 27.

We are the firstfruits of GOD, and to the LAMB! "These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." Revelations 14: 4. We are special because we are redeemed from among men!

This redemption is followed by an effectual calling wherein men and women are made to come forth from the old world into the Kingdom of Christ!! Friends! Get on the Emmaus Road!!

This redemption is attended with regeneration through which we receive a new life because we are "Born again"!! "³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3: 3 - 6

Friends, we are to be distinguished from the multitudes of the earth because we should be walking as living, alive spiritually, and not dead in our trespasses and sins! "And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins," Ephesians 2; 1

We are not to be yoked to this world! "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" 2 Corinthians 6: 14. Friends! We are the light and not of the darkness! " "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5: 14 -16. We bring flavour to the world. " "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." Matthew 5: 13.

If the present-day church seeks to cultivate a friendship with the world, The Holy Spirit has a message from the pen of the Apostle James. "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not

know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” James 4: 4.

It is separation from the world and setting ourselves apart from it, dedicated wholly to GOD, that is Christ’s prayer for us! This should be our prayer for ourselves too!

The Book 2: For Whom Was This Prayer Offered?

Jesus prayed for HIS disciples. HE referred to the company of men and women who would be saved by HIS grace.

To make us holy is a lifetime’s work. We live in an instant society, but we must shed this desire for instant satisfaction and crave the discipline of a life totally dedicated to GOD! Oh, that we would rise to the utmost pitch of holy living and never be content with anything less!

If we have done well, to GOD be the glory! But, here’s my challenge to you. There is more to do! Are you steadfast? Do you believe? Don’t coast along on past accomplishments! We must renew our hearts every day! We must grow in faith and knowledge of The LORD daily! We must do more!!

If we have loved much, to GOD be the glory! May GOD be praised because HE gave us out- stretched hearts and hands, but there are more opportunities yet to share GOD’s great love!

If we have believed, and believed steadfastly, praise HIM from whom all blessings flow! But there is more to believe of our Almighty Friend, The LORD, Jesus Christ! Furthermore, Jesus, Himself, prayed, “that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” John 17: 21,

HE prayed for our unity! Why aren’t we one? Because sin is a dividing element! “looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶ lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.” Hebrews 12: 15 -17

Our infirmities of judgement are aggravated by our imperfections of character, AND our walking at a distance from our GOD causes us to stumble over pride and self-sufficiency. “He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6: 8.

We are to walk closely and humbly with our GOD, but so many are walking silent and solo. Here is a recent fact. 79% of evangelical protestants surveyed said they have prayed at least once in the past 3 months. We are to “pray without ceasing,” 1 Thessalonians 5: 17, not just now and then!

Being distant from GOD breeds coldness and lukewarm-ness, a cooling off out of which grow disunion, division, sects, and heresies.

If we are truly abiding in Christ to the fullest, we should abide in union with each other and with GOD.

Moreover, our LORD finishes HIS most comprehensive prayer with a petition that we might all be with HIM! ““Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” John 17: 24. HE prayed that we might be with HIM where HE is, in glory!

Uprightness of walk and a cleanliness of heart are absolutely necessary for the purposes of a Christian life, whether it is here on earth, or in the Hereafter!! Do not imagine that holiness will necessarily follow because we pray occasionally (once in 3 months), or read our Bible 10 minutes a week, or listen to an excellent preacher now and then! Brethren! GOD, Himself, must work in you! The Holy Spirit must inhabit you! This can only come by faith, believing in Jesus Christ as the Only Begotten Son of The Father. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among

us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1: 14. You GOD, The Father Almighty, who rose Jesus from the dead on the third day, and in the blessed Holy Spirit! Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." John 17: 3. "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." 1 John 5: 20

Do you know what this is? This is salvation! You have been saved!

The TOOK: Jesus never prayed a deceitful prayer.

You never hear HIM mentioning before the throne of GOD anyone's name whom HE does not really love with an eternal affection and love. Did you not know, you are loved with an everlasting divine love! Don't let the world defeat you!

It is to be noted that GOD's purposes will be achieved! HIS glory! Our good! Both will be accomplished!

"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." Romans 8: 28

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 17: 17, Jesus prayed

Brethren, it must be carefully noted that we worship a GOD who calls Himself "The GOD of Truth" *He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.* Deuteronomy 32: 4. "Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Psalm 31: 5.

We trust a Saviour, GOD the Son who calls Himself "The Truth". "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14: 6 and "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1: 14. "For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." John 1: 17 We are indwelt by GOD, The Spirit, who calls Himself "The Spirit of Truth". "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." John 14: 17. "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." John 15: 26. "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." John 16: 13

We are to read and study The WORD of GOD which is called "The Word of Truth". "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, For I have hoped in Your ordinances." Psalm 119: 43.

Our entire life in Christ is to be built upon the solid rock of Christ's Truth. "Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:" Matthew 7: 24

We were saved by The Word of Truth, also called the Glorious Gospel! "because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel," Colossians 1: 5

The tool used by GOD in the sanctification of HIS people is the truth of HIS Word. "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 17: 17. That's how important HIS Word is!! This is why we need to read and study and understand it!! GOD's Word is wisdom! GOD's Word is sufficient! "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word." Psalm 119: 9. (See also Psalm 142, Psalm 151).

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” John 17: 17. It wasn’t just Luther or Calvin that brought in the Reformation. It was The Word of GOD! That is what brought about the Reformation! Men desiring and seeking after The Word of Truth!

As a people we may sing praises to GOD for HIS Holy Word! But, are we practically obeying it? We need to take heed according to The Word. “(Psalm 119:9). “The Bible is the true lantern for a dark and cloudy time. Let us beware of traveling without it’s light.”, said J.C. Ryle.

We can trust the Bible. We can trust Christ. And we can trust HIS wonderful work in our lives. HIS Word is our treasure. Let us bind it in the best way to our hearts, in the best Morocco leather, and guild it’s edges with a life spent in love, truth, purity, and Holy zeal and go out into the world with it! If we do this, it will do its great work in our lives!

I urge you all, Stay in The Word!!!! Keep in The Word!!! Amen!

POST NOTES:

Jesus is the head of the church -

“And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church,” Ephesians 1: 22

“And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Colossians 1: 18

“The stone *which* the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.” Psalms 118: 22

“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.” 1 Corinthians 11: 3