

## ***THE HEART PRAYER OF JESUS***

When a friend or family member is to leave for a long time or even die, they will often express their deepest heart desires to those they love. This is what Jesus did just before he was about to go to the cross. The gospel of John chapters 13 through 16 are a clear account of the things that Jesus expressed to the small band of disciples that he had spent over three years with. In this message we will examine the prayer that he spoke to Father God in John 17. Jesus recognized the various enemies of God's kingdom that Christians and the church would have to deal with.

**Disunity      Discouragement      Devil**

As we examine his prayer, we find that his heart is not only towards God and his return to heaven, but he was also very much aware of the protection his disciples would need after he left. He mentions his disciples 44 times in the John 17 prayer.

***'I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name - the name you gave me - so that they may be one as we are one. 17:11***

Jesus foresaw that one of the main needs of his disciples would be protection from divisions and disunity. He wanted them to be of one heart and mind with each other just as He was with God the Father and Holy Spirit. ***The early church exhibited this quality just before God poured out His Spirit upon them at Pentecost. Mighty power was released upon and through them!***

**Warnings about Division** (from God via apostle Paul)

***'I urge you brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. keep away from them. - Romans 16:17***

***I appeal to you brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you may agree with one another so that there will be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.***  
**- 1 Corinthians 1:10**

***Avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that have nothing to do with him. - Titus 3:9-10***

Jesus was well aware of the danger of disunity and the awesome power of unity. Jesus experienced and taught the power of agreement.

***I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.- Matthew 18:19-20***

*Agree = symphoneo (Greek in Strong's Concordance)*

That word reminds us of the word symphony, which is when all available instruments sound together to make a beautiful harmony. When two or more believers come together in total harmony and agreement over an issue, God releases his supernatural power to prevail in that situation. Sometimes when Jesus went to minister, he asked certain persons to leave.

Jesus, Peter, James and John came to the home of a synagogue leader named Jairus, whose child had died. When Jesus told the crying onlookers that she was asleep, they laughed at him. Jesus then put them all out. Only the parents and the disciples were allowed to go in with Jesus to watch him bring the child back to life. - Mark 5:35-43. Faith operates better when skeptics are not around to quench faith and the Holy Spirit's activity.

The place of agreement is the place of power.  
Disunity and disagreement result in impotence.

Many times Christians think that they are in full agreement when they are not. I have prayed with others who claim to be in agreement over what we prayed for, but then they make statements of doubt and unbelief such as 'I hope this works out.' True belief does not have to be worked up but it is a genuine assurance from God that the prayer will be answered. The amount of time we spend in prayer does not increase God's willingness to answer. Our time with God helps get us more in tune with God's purposes rather than our own and thus our faith to believe Him for answers is developed. One of my heroes in the faith is George Mueller. He was a man of God's Word and of prayer. He read the Bible through 200 times and used it as his foundation for his faith for God to answer all of his prayers. At a time in the 1800's when many questioned God's existence, Mueller felt led of God to show the skeptics that God was real. He housed thousands of orphans and never let anyone except God know his needs of provision. God answered his prayers! Mueller spent his morning devotional time with God in the Bible until his soul was happy in the Lord.

*The first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day is to have my soul happy in the Lord. - George Mueller*

### **The Detriment of Discouragement**

*I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have **the full measure of my joy** within them. - John 17:13*

In the above prayer by Jesus to the Father, he goes on to speak of how his disciples have his word but the world hates them. He wanted them to be full of joy in the midst of it and not be discouraged. He knew that they would need to be courageous as they went out to spread his kingdom message to a world influenced by hostile dark forces.

**Discouragement** / from roots of French word **descouragier**  
**des = away**      **corage = courage**

Discouragement takes away a person's confidence and courage to face life's callings and challenges. There are many examples of this in the Bible and throughout history. In Exodus 6 Moses gives the enslaved Israelites the good news that God is going to deliver them from their bondage in Egypt and lead them to take possession of a promised land. However, they would not listen to Moses nor gladly receive it. Why?

*They did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage.  
- Exodus 6:9*

Their long term bondage in Egypt had affected their hope and faith for anything better. They had developed a negative slave mentality and likely had done lots of grumbling and complaining with one another about their hardships and hopeless situation. It is easy for us to criticize them, but sometimes we are just like them. We focus more on our problems than on Almighty God, who is able and willing to do more than we could even think or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20)

### **Injections of Courage**

Most people like to be encouraged and all people need it at times. Before I left for several years of mission work in England and beyond, the Lord led me to meditate on the book of Ephesians and on the first chapters of the book of Joshua. As I prepared to enter a new land to make a difference for the kingdom of God, I was encouraged by the life of Joshua. He was the man God chose to assume leadership of Israel after the amazing example of Moses, who brought God's people out of Egypt and through the desert. Joshua had seen the challenges of leading a vast company of people. Now God had assigned him the task of leading them into the promised land, conquering its enemies and then occupying it. God knew what Joshua needed and encouraged him several times.

*No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you. **Be strong and courageous**, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. **Be strong and courageous.** Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you,.....  
Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and courageous.** Do not be terrified; Do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.  
- Joshua 1:5-7, 9 NIV*

Joshua accepted this assignment and then instructed the officers of the people to tell the people to get their supplies ready (1:10). When going to war, it is important to have all available supplies and weapons. A key component of warfare is the morale of the soldiers, which is why encouragement is so important. The Christian life is one of constant battles with world systems, the flesh and the devil.

*See to it brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But **encourage one another daily**, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we **hold firmly till the end, the confidence** we had at first. - Hebrews 3:12-14 NIV*

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching. - Hebrews 10:23-25 NIV*

Jesus prayed that his disciples for generations to come would live in unity and be full of joy. He knew that the source of division and discouragement comes from the devil.

*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. - John 17:15 NIV*

One way we can be protected from the devil is to be more aware of his wiles. We will discuss this in our next message called **The Gates of Hell.**

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