

# Session 10: John 17

by Joseph Carroll

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of selflessness, glorifying God, and doing the will of God, and warns against the dangers of not doing so, including robbing God and leading to spiritual viruses and criticism.*

**Duration:** 43:28

**Scripture:** Luke 9:23, John 7:17, John 17:1, Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 2:7-9

**Topics:** "Christian Life", "Glorifying God", "Selflessness"

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## Description

Joseph Carroll emphasizes the profound nature of coming into God's presence, recognizing our need for His mercy and grace. He reflects on Jesus' selflessness in John 17, where Christ prays for His glorification not for His own sake but for the Father's glory, setting an example for believers to follow. Carroll warns against the dangers of criticism among Christians, attributing it to personal grievances rather than genuine concern for others. He stresses that true glorification of God comes from doing His will, which often requires a death to our own desires. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a church rooted in love, filled with the fullness of God, to glorify Him in all things.

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## Transcript

Holy Father, we realize it is no light thing to come into Thy presence, for Thou art God over all. Thou art uncreated life, the Lord, the giver of life, who alone can give and sustain and take away life. We thank Thee that in Thee we live and move and have our being.

There is not a word in our tongue, but lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether. Holy Father, and we come to Thee this evening conscious that as the work of Thy hands and the objects of Thy love, we are needful of Thy blessing. We thank Thee that Thou dost know us altogether.

Thou dost know our hearts, our motivations, our attitudes, our ambitions. There is nothing hidden from Thee. And, our Father, we realize that unless by Thy grace Thou dost move upon us and speak, no word can be uttered, no truth can be understood, no decision can be made, that will glorify Thee.

So we come to Thee in our helplessness and yet with faith, because Thou hast bidden us come that we might obtain mercy, and, Lord, we need mercy. We need mercy, for Thou knowest Thou hast given us much light, and it is quite evident that our obedience is not what it ought to be. And so we ask for mercy, we ask for cleansing from the defilement of sin, and we ask for grace tonight, that great grace might be upon us all, not that we are worthy of the least of Thy mercies, but because Thou art a God of grace, Thou

art the God of all grace, Thou will pour out Thy grace upon us.

Speak that word which Thou knowest can alone be the living word to our needy hearts, that word which is quickened by the Spirit, illumined by the Spirit, in order that understanding Thy truth, and strengthened by the Spirit, we might walk in it. Father, Thou knowest that many of us have been treading the dusty paths of a sinful world today, and we're defiled. Give grace for that one whose mind is filled with the thoughts of this world, to cast them from his mind and think on the things of eternity.

Give grace to that one in whose heart there is an attitude that should not be there, to confess it and put it away. O Lord, do Thine own wondrous work in each heart, so that it can be said of us tonight, as was said of that early church, they were all of one accord in one place. May it be so.

And we know that when this is so, the Spirit comes. He comes with power, He comes to reveal, He comes to strengthen, He comes to calm, He comes to burn. Father, this is the burden of our hearts, the moving of Thy Spirit tonight upon the preacher and upon the people, to the glory of Jesus Christ and to Thine own ultimate glory.

And this we pray with thanksgiving in Jesus' name. Amen. Shall we turn again to John chapter 17? John chapter 17, an inexhaustible chapter.

We seem to touch on a verse and leave it behind, and then we have to go back to it. Reading from verse 1, these words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee.

In this prayer we have seen the utter selflessness of the Son of God. What does it mean to grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ? It means to become more selfless, to become more selfless. Here at the beginning of his prayer, he is saying, Father, glorify Thy Son, glorify me, but not for my glory, but for Thine.

Glorify Thy Son, not for my exaltation, but ultimately for Thine. And then we have seen in his prayer, even though it was only possibly nine or ten hours to the cross, and he knew it, there is no mention of the cross. There is no mention of the suffering that awaits him, of the necessity for him to become sin, the utter selflessness of the Son of God.

And then we find that although he knew that Peter would deny him, and Peter would deny him with oaths and cursings, although he knew that they would all forsake him and flee, there is not one word of criticism of his own. Not a word. He only has words of praise for them.

And I think if we discern accurately why it is that Christians, quotation marks, criticize other Christians, it's because of this, that somehow, somewhere, their toes have been trodden on, and they don't like it. Somewhere along the line, things have not gone in the way the individual wanted them to go, and so he becomes critical of the person who has thwarted him, or who doesn't do what he wants him to do, in the way that he wants him to do it. And so the criticism abounds.

I was speaking to a brother recently who was once called to labor in a city, might be Greenville, might not. But he said to the officers of the church now, am I coming as a servant of the Lord, or as your hired servant? Good question to ask. Well of course the answer is, of course you're coming as a servant of the Lord.

But very soon he found out that he wasn't a servant of the Lord to them, he was a hired servant. And because he would not be their servant, and he would alone be the Lord's servant, the criticism abounded, and of course the obvious, he had to leave. You trace criticism to its source, and you will usually find that the one who is critical, is the one who has had his will thwarted.

But here we have a tremendous example from the Son of God. At least he could have prayed about Peter. But he didn't even mention Peter, he just praised him.

You think they're the most perfect men on the face of the earth. And then on to the end of his prayer, where he's praying that they might behold his glory, and that they might be one. But through it all, we find that the passion of the Son of God is the glorifying of his Father.

He begins there, and it goes right through. The glorifying of his Father. And this is the central passion of every true servant of God.

You will recall I've mentioned before, when James Burns, who had seen tremendous movings of the Spirit in Scotland, suddenly to everybody's surprise, was called to China. And when he was asked, was he going to China to win souls, he said, no, I'm going out to China to glorify God. Now, how do you glorify God? Why could he say, I am going out to China to glorify God? Because he certainly did not win a great many souls in China, even to the day of his death.

How do we glorify God? We glorify God by doing the work that he gives us to do. And no other way. There are people who have worked in the name of Jesus, and given in the name of Jesus, and labored in the name of Jesus, who do not and never have glorified God.

Why? Because they are not doing what God wanted them to do. They are doing what they wanted to do. Go out to China, what's the matter with you, Burns? Here you are, the only man in Scotland that God's using in this way.

We've had a tremendous revival right across the land. You're the only man that the Spirit of God is on with his power. You're going to China? Yes.

Why are you going to China? Because I'm going out there in the will of God. If I stay here, I'll be out of the will of God. So I'm going out to China, not to save souls, to glorify God.

And in eternity, when Burns receives his reward, he may get a greater reward for what he did in China with fewer souls, than what he receives in Scotland with the many souls. So glorifying God is not a matter of sitting down and saying, now, how can I best use my resources to do the most that I can do for God? To glorify God, you must find out what God wants you to do, and you must do it. And not until you are doing it, are you glorifying God.

You might say, well, how do I know? Well, you can know in a very simple way. Guidance is not as difficult as some people make it out to be. There's a tremendous verse on guidance, possibly the greatest in the Word of God.

John 7, 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the teaching. He shall know of the doctrine.

Now that's a problem. Why is it difficult for some people to determine what the will of God is for them? Because the will of God is very often not their will. And there's conflict, great conflict.

If any man will do his will, he shall know. He shall know of the doctrine. He shall know of the teaching.

But before you can know, you must have been brought to that place under the wooing of the Holy Spirit, and in obedience to the Holy Spirit, where you can say, nevertheless not my will, but thine be done at every point. You see, our Lord in this tremendous gospel, in chapter 6, that is these words. There it is.

That's clear enough. I came down from heaven, what for? Not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. You cannot do the will of him that sent you until you come to the end of your own will.

You can't do it. Not until you say, I live not to do mine own will, can you say, I will to do the will of my Lord. You can't do it.

Now I'm going to ask you a question. You've heard a lot of preachers. How many preachers have you heard who preached in the demonstration and power of the Spirit of God? How many? I'm not talking about eloquent preachers, knowledgeable preachers, brilliant preachers, and so on.

I'm talking about preachers who preach with power, and you know it because you feel it. How many? Maybe five? Maybe you don't need that many fingers. There are not many who preach with power.

Do you know why? Because they don't will to do the will of God, not their own, that's why. And I know a lot of preachers, and I've preached to a lot of them, and a lot of missionaries too. If you're going to glorify God in this life, there's going to be a crisis in your life.

Always there's a crisis, and at that crisis you're going to die once for all to your will. Once for all. And our Lord lays it down very clearly in Luke 9.23. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, let him dethrone self, let him take his own will off the throne of his life.

That's a crisis. And if you respond to the willings of the Spirit of God, He will bring you to that crisis. And when He brings you to that crisis, you will make a decision.

And you will be empowered by the Spirit to make it, when you say yes to what He's telling you to do. You'll be empowered to make it. I can remember very clearly the night I made it.

And nobody had to tell me it was the death of my government of my life, the Spirit of God told me. And the Spirit of God will tell you, there is always a crisis. And at that crisis, the subjective aspect of the cross is applied.

And the cross is an instrument of death. Death in order to life. Where there is death in the spiritual realm, there is life.

Where there is no death, there is no life. Where there is death to your will, there's the revelation of the will of God, always. Where there is no death to your will, there is no revelation of the will of God.

And you can go on year after year after year, walking in the flesh instead of in the Spirit. And when you are doing that, instead of contributing to the glory of God in the church, you are hindering the work of the Spirit in the church. And you become subject to all sorts of spiritual viruses that attack you.

You could spend a week on them, but you know something about them. That virus of criticism, that virus of I know, that virus of judgment, they're all evident. That virus of self-exaltation, if any man will do his will, he shall know of the teaching.

What did Christ Jesus come into the world for? Not to do his own will, but the will of the Father that sent him. Now, if we do not face the subjective implications of the cross, and we are not doing the will of God for our lives, which is clearly revealed to us when we die to our own will, what are we doing? We are robbing God. The Bible says your body and your spirit are God.

They belong to him. They do not belong to you. They are God.

If God isn't controlling, you are controlling, therefore you are robbing God of what belongs to him. That's a rather serious business. Can a man rob God? We look back on Israel, and we find all the faults with Israel.

The professing Church of Jesus Christ is no better. In fact, it's worse, because the Church of Jesus Christ has more life. Israel of the Old Testament didn't have a New Testament.

You do. So do I. Israel did not have the tremendous overpowering example of the love of Christ. We do.

Great privilege. Great responsibility. Can a man rob God? Yes, he can.

He can rob God when he lives for himself a life that is not his. For he has been recreated in Christ to do the will of God. Now, why did Christ come into the world to do the will of his Father, that his Father might be glorified? And we have seen in our recent messages that in order that his Father might be glorified, there had to be what is called in Philippians chapter 2, the self-emptying or the self-abnegation of the Son of God.

There had to be the giving up of his glory, the surrendering of his power, the surrendering of that worship that was his of the angelic beings of heaven. All the honor, all the power, all the glory was surrendered, given up, in order that he might do the will of his Father. And we have seen that because he did the will of his Father, that he is now exalted far above all.

God hath given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth. Now, I want you to turn again to Revelation 5. Revelation 5 is one of the key chapters of the Bible, because we can test our exposition of other passages by this passage.

Now first, you will remember in Hebrews, in the first chapter of Hebrews last week, we saw a very important point. So you just keep one hand there in the first chapter of Revelation and turn back to Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 1, verse 1, God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

And we observe this very remarkable fact, that God has spoken through his Son. Everything that God has to say to you is going to be through his Son, everything. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

All our blessings are in one place and in one person. Everything that God has to say to you is going to be by his Son. But here is the interesting point.

There comes the exaltation of the Son of God, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power, for by him all things go here. Then not a word of his miracles, not a word of his parables, not a word of his teachings. This book is a book of redemption.

That's what it's all about. And so the writer of the Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, comes immediately to this glorious truth of redemption, when he had by himself purged our sins. That's all he has to say.

I once preached for a week in a certain very famous seminary in this country, which is noted for majoring in apologetics. You don't have to defend the scriptures, you don't have to defend the doctrines, you don't have to defend the Son of God. You just preach Jesus Christ.

Intellectually, it was props. Spiritually, it was lukewarm. Perhaps a little less than lukewarm, perhaps just plain cold.

Since my eyes were fixed on Jesus, what do we sing? I've lost sight of all besides. So often we sing a lie. So enchained my spirit's vision, looking at the crucified.

That's what beholding us in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from one degree of radiance to another. Listen my friends, people don't need to hear brilliant men, they need to see the living Christ in men. They need to see the living Christ in a man.

And they need to hear, feel the power of the living Christ, when the word is preached. They need to see, they need to feel, then they'll believe. And so the writer of the Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Spirit, completely bypasses his teachings, his miracles, his parables, everything, when he by himself purged our sin.

Now that doesn't say we ignore everything that has not a direct reference to the redemption of the Son of God. But I want to say this, that everything points to it, and everything is related to it. That's the central truth.

That's the great message. And then in Revelation chapter 5, well let's look at chapter 1, we have so many riches here. Verse 5, And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, unto him that loved us and taught us, no, unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

And then in Revelation 5, verse 9, and this is a song of the redeemed. And they sung a new song, saying thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou hast taught us, thou hast instructed us, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, or a kingdom of priests, and we shall reign on the earth. Why are they worshipping? Why are they praising? What is the content of this new song? Redemption.

Redemption. Verse 11, And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, hundred million and more, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was I want you to notice this here, to receive. To receive.

Why? Because he gave it up. Worthy is the Lamb to receive what? Power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. I want you to notice power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, blessing.

And then finally that great chorus, the greatest of all. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. What are the three things ultimately that Christ gave up? He gave up honour, and glory, and power.

And what is now given back? Honour, glory, power, and blessing. Now listen my friend. Whenever you touch any of the honour, or any of the glory, you're robbing God.

Don't forget it. If you want a word of praise at any time, for anything you have done in the name of Jesus, you are robbing God. Do you want to be noticed? Do you want to be heard? You want to be thought well of? Why? If any man, or any woman in this place tonight, had to place under the direct power of the Spirit of God, a placard on the front of his body, and another one on his back, on which would be the two worst thoughts you have thought, or the two worst sins you've committed in the last six months, you wouldn't go out onto the street.

You wouldn't be seen in public. Nor would I. The Apostle Paul, just to make sure that we understood what he was, said, I am the chief of sinners. Would you say that? Now if you're really honest, some of you people, and I know some of you reasonably well.

If you're really honest, you would not say it. Because you think in some senses you are superior spiritually, or some other way to somebody else. There is a very subtle sin of cultural pride in the South, that's going to take a lot of the people in the South down to hell.

Right down to hell. Do you know why? The Word of God says that God knows the proud afar off. He pushes them away from him.

Now listen my friend, if you profess to know Jesus Christ, and there's any pride in you, you go home tonight and tell him to get rid of it. And whatever it takes, you let him get rid of it. Now he'll take you to word.

He'll take you to word. If you say Lord, I am proud and I want you to deal with this pride in me, because it's the devil's sin. Now you get rid of it, and I don't care what it costs.

He'll get rid of it for you, but it might be painful. So be careful before you say it. He'll take you to word.

The honor, the glory belongs to Jesus Christ alone. Do you want a glory in something? Glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a cross it is.

God forbid that I should glory say in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now let's turn back to Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 3, where we have the greatest prayer of the mighty apostle Paul.

Verse 14. For this cause I bow my knees unto the God, unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory. The riches of his glory.

To be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man. To what end? That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith. Or as Henley Mowl puts it, that Christ may feel perfectly at home in your heart.

Now this is the work of the Spirit of God. First the Spirit of God must move, and he must strengthen you to do this. And if you yield to him, he will do it for you.

So that Jesus Christ will feel perfectly at home in your heart. Now I want you to notice this. There's always a test as to whether or not a person, Christ, feels perfectly at home in the heart of a person.

It's in this same verse. What's the test? He's a powerful preacher. No.

He's a consistent witness. No. What is it? That ye being rooted and grounded in love.

There it is. You can't miss it, can you, when you see it. Who is the man in whose heart Jesus Christ feels perfectly at home? The man who is rooted and grounded in love.

It's rather clear, isn't it? We had a very wonderful meeting yesterday in the place where I worship, and the pastor brought out a quite important point, and it was this. That you hear a lot of people who say, I'm contending for the faith. Well we are to contend for the faith.

But you know you can be very contentious in contending for the faith. And in your defense of the faith, you can quite often decimate the faithful. And yet Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, is crystal clear.

He says the thing that you are to seek after, and the thing that you are to make your quest is love. How often do you hear people contending for love? Isn't it sad? Isn't it sad? There were two missionaries in Japan, and I was convinced both of them were demon-possessed, and they were two, the two greatest defenders of the faith in Japan, so-called. Quotation marks again.

Now let's face it. If a man is rooted and grounded in love, what is his life going to be characterized by? Selflessness. Selflessness.

Love is self-renouncing in order that it might become self-giving. You cannot become self-giving until there is self-renunciation. The Son of God cannot die on the cross unless he surrenders all that he had in heaven.

There must be self-renunciation in order that there might be the self-giving of the Son of God. Selflessness. Ye being rooted and grounded in love.

What beautiful words. You couldn't surpass them in the English language. How could they? Rooted.

Nothing superficial. Rooted. There was a tree that fell on a house here in Greenville recently, and we passed by the tree.

It was a huge oak, but its roots were rotten. A path had been built around that tree, and something had happened to the roots. They were very short, and so the rains came, and the winds blew, and great was the fall thereof.

No roots. When we were in Bougainville during the last war, we pitched a lot of our tents very foolishly under some large trees, massive trees, and when the rains came and the winds blew in the rainy season, a lot of them fell, and some of them fell on the tents of men, and they were killed. They were crushed to

death, and so we moved our tents very quickly.

Why? Intense heat and a great rainfall had produced a rapid growth, but no roots, and these massive trees only had roots no more than two feet deep, and just toppled over. It's not what is seen that counts, it's what's not seen, and I've often thought of some of these massive churches. Let the winds blow and the rains come, see what happens, see what happens.

But listen my friend, if you are rooted and grounded in love, when the winds of hell blow against you, and when the Peter in your life curses you, that's when you find out whether or not you're rooted and grounded in love. Oh yes, the tree might shake, and the branches will wave, and a few leaves may fall off, but I tell you that tree will stand. There was a caustic man who once came to Sadhu Sundar Singh, and he said to him, Sadhu, Sadhu was a very famous Christian, Sadhu was a teacher, what is sanctification? And Sadhu looked at him, and he said, sanctification, sanctification, do you mean when the beautiful red rose is crushed by the cruel hand, the response of that rose is to bathe that hand that crushed it with its perfume? Is that what you mean? He said, do you mean when that sharp, cruel axe is plunged into the heart of the tree to kill it, the response of the tree is to bathe the axe with its life-giving sap? Is that what you mean? He said, that's enough.

That's love. When that cruel hand crushes you, what is the response? Is it perfume, or is it a stench? That's the test, isn't it? That's the test. Rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now, how is a man filled with all the fullness of God? By knowing the love of Christ. Very simple, isn't it? And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God. What is the great mainspring of the life? What is that which inspires? What is that which constrains? It's the love of Christ.

If you people have listened to these last three or four messages, and you haven't been changed, I doubt if you'll say, to consider the love of Christ what he gave up for you and for me. If that doesn't change you, nothing will. Nothing will.

What is it that changes a man? What is it that inspires a man? What is it that keeps a man true, that keeps him faithful? It's the love of Christ. Paul said, the love of Christ constraineth us. That's what constrains us.

That's what compels us. For we thus judge that if one died, then we're all dead, and he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again. That's it.

He says, the love of Christ constrains us, for we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead, and he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again. The love of Christ, that's the mainspring. To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

And to what end? Verse 21. It's a great verse. It's more than a doxology.

Unto him, unto God the master of it all, the great planner, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. There it is. That's where he finishes.

Tremendous prayer. What is the purpose of it all? That God should be glorified. Unto him, unto God be glory.

How should he be glorified? In the church. In what kind of a church? In a church that is rooted and grounded in love. In a church that is filled with all the fullness of God.

In that church God is glorified. Now, and then, thank God, when that church is perfected, as it will be, throughout all ages, age after age, eon to eon to eon, forever, the church will glorify God through Jesus Christ. Now shall we pray? Dear Father, these are very plain truths in your word.

To know them and not to respond to them is to incur guilt, is to commit sin. Better that we did not know them, better that we had not heard them. Oh Lord, forgive our lovelessness as a church and as individuals.

This is the sure evidence that we are not filled with all the fullness of God and Christ does not feel perfectly at home in our heart. Oh Father, thou dost know each individual heart bowed before thee, whether it is a critical attitude, whether it is pride, whether it is a judging, or even a bitter spirit. Thou knowest.

Don't let us escape thy sword. Don't let us escape thy word.

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