

# Session 4: John 17

by Joseph Carroll

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of glorifying God through the salvation of sinners and the unity of the body of Christ.*

**Duration:** 39:36

**Scripture:** John 17:1

**Topics:** "Christian Life", "The Power of Prayer", "Glorifying God"

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## Description

Joseph Carroll emphasizes the profound significance of John 17, highlighting its importance as a prayer of Jesus for Himself, His apostles, and His church. He reflects on the necessity of glorifying God in all aspects of life and ministry, asserting that true preaching and living should be centered on God's glory rather than personal gain or self-interest. Carroll warns against self-centeredness in the Christian life and encourages believers to seek God's will and purpose in their daily activities, ultimately aiming for the salvation of others through the glorification of God. He stresses that every believer's calling, whether as a parent, businessperson, or minister, should be to glorify God above all else.

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## Transcript

We turn again tonight to John chapter 17. It was the great John Knox who, during his long illness before his death, had this chapter read to him every day, every day. I would suggest that if you want to comfort a person on a deathbed, this is a far better passage of scripture to read than John 14.

Knox had it read to him every day. The famous doct, the French preacher, had it read to him 60 times on his deathbed, 60 times. And Spiner, the great German, the great pietist, who never in his lifetime could bring himself to the place where he could preach on this chapter, because he felt it was completely beyond his power to do so.

Yet he was a great preacher, a great man of God. On his deathbed, had it read three times to him before he died. And this gives us some little understanding of the tremendous import of this prayer in the 17th chapter of the Gospel of John.

Bishop Ryle, any evangelical scholar who knows his literature knows that Ryle was one of the great commentators of this century and the last, has this to say about this chapter. He says it is the most remarkable chapter in all the Bible. It stands alone.

There is nothing like it. That's quite a statement. It's true.

And Brown, the commentator, said it is the most remarkable portion of the most remarkable book in the world. And little wonder then that it's very difficult to get away from it. You think you can grasp it in a message or two and then you find 15 or 20 messages opening up before you from the chapter.

At least that's what I have found during this past week. And so we will look at it again tonight. John 17, reading from verse 1. These words begged Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come.

Glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. Now, usually the chapter is divided into our Lord's Prayer for himself, which is in verses 1 to 5, for his apostles in verses 6 to 19, and then verse 20 to the end for his church.

Firstly for himself, then for the apostles, then for his church. And I want to say in passing that it is his church. Once you realize it is his church, that can revolutionize your activity toward ministry.

I'm always a little disturbed by people who say, my church. Is it? I go to my church, I give to my church. You are mistaken, it's his church.

And this assembly here tonight is just as much his church as any other church in any other part of the world. You don't serve in your church, you serve his church as he directs you. And this can save us from the pernicious sin of denominationalism, and give us a true vision of a world in need of Christ, which was our Lord's vision.

It's his church. Not yours, not mine, it's his. We are members of his body and of his church, but it's his church.

It's his church worldwide. We need a world view of the body of Christ, his church. And so he prays for himself, he prays for his apostles, and he prays for his church.

But I want you to notice a very important point here. It's not obvious, but it's very important. When Christ prayed for himself, he had the work that his father gave him to do in view.

When he prayed for his apostles, he also had the work that his father gave him to do in view. And when he prayed for his church, he also has in view the work that his father gave him to do. That's very important.

I want you to observe it here. Father, glorify thy son that thy son also may glorify thee, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. Now, what was the work the father gave him to do? The giving of eternal life to as many as the father gave him.

That was the work the father sent him into the world to do. And in order that the son might do the will of the father in the world, he was given power over all flesh. God will never give you a work to do, but that he will give you with the commission the power to fulfill it.

This was true of the son. It is true of every person called of God to do the will of God, for the glory of God. He was given power over all flesh, to what end? That he might give eternal life to as many as the father had given him.

Therefore, he could say, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. The giving of eternal life to as many as had been given him by the father. And this brings us to another important point.

It's this. I'm often asked, do you think this man is a good preacher? And I always give the same answer. There is only one test, and it's this.

Does he preach with power? That's all. Does he preach with power? Now, some people might give you seven or eight conditions to test a good preacher by, but it's superfluous. Just one is enough.

Does he preach with power? But what about the content of his message? If the content isn't what God would have it to be, he won't preach with power. If the message is not the message God would have him to deliver, he won't preach with power. If he is preaching for his own glory or the glory of his denomination or some movement, he won't preach with power.

He must preach for the glory of God. If he is living for himself and not for the glory of his Lord, he won't preach with power. If he is trusting his own gifts, capacities, experience, anything else, he won't preach with power.

Only one test. Is the power of the Spirit of God manifest when he preaches? If it isn't there, he's not an effective preacher. Homiletically, his sermon may be perfect.

Intellectually, he may be a giant. Spiritually, he adds up to zero in God's sight. Sounding brass, tinkling cymbals.

A man is given power, the power of God's Spirit, for one thing only, to finish the work God gives him to do. The Spirit of God is given to glorify Jesus Christ because the desire of the Son is the glory of the Father. And ultimately, all things shall be delivered up to the Father that he might be all in all.

So let's get these very important truths very clearly before us. It's not a matter of knowledge. Some of the greatest preachers the world has ever known have been, in the eyes of the world, very unsophisticated, illiterate men.

Moody was one. I was reading a sermon of Dr. Tozer's just last night of a very great Methodist preacher, Peter Cartwright, who was also, in the eyes of the world, an illiterate man. And he was at this big Methodist camp meeting and this evening, this particular evening, he preached on hill and a great big old logger, a big lumber man, about 260 pounds, came to the mourner's rail and knelt and sobbed and quaked and cried and called upon the Lord.

And there was a young, in the eyes of the world, very sophisticated young man, not too long out of seminary, and he was deeply disturbed by this old logger crying and weeping and convulsing. And he said, compose yourself, compose yourself. And Peter Cartwright was standing next to this young man and he put his hand on the shoulder of the logger and he said, pray on, my dear man, there will be no composure in hell where you're going.

That's preaching. That's preaching. And then in true early Methodist style, the old logger got through the Lord and the glory of the Lord filled his soul.

And he leapt into the air with a yell. And to express his joy, he grabbed the first person next to him, which was this little fellow, hugged him and began to jog around the room with him. Would that we saw more of

that.

That's preaching. He's a man controlled by the Spirit of God. Preaching with power.

Peter Cartwright. So let's be careful to fully understand these principles. The man of God is called by God for one thing primarily, to glorify by the power of the Spirit, Jesus Christ his Lord.

To glorify Jesus Christ. I had a long distance telephone call from a brother preacher just last week. And he said to me, do you know so and so? I said, yes, he's a very gifted man, very gifted preacher.

He said, my, does he know his Latin and his Greek and his Hebrew? And he went on for a few minutes. I said, yes, that's what's wrong with him. And he was shocked.

I said, you came away from that service very conscious of what this man was. And that was the impression that was left with you. He failed that night in his preaching.

You glorified Jesus Christ. Not yourself. No preacher worthy of the name is pedantic.

He's self-effacing. He glorifies Jesus Christ. When the apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven, into the presence of God himself, he didn't say a word about it for thirteen years.

Why? Because he thought if he did, they would think of him above what they ought to think. So he didn't mention it. The true man of God.

Why? If they had known he was caught up into heaven himself. Nobody has ever been there. Paul's the greatest.

So he didn't mention it. The true man of God and the true preacher is very careful never to mention anything that will glorify him and thereby in the slightest degree detract from the glory of his Lord. There are not very many good books on preaching.

But Campbell Morgan has one. And he says the good preacher will never use a three-syllable word if he can use a two-syllable word to do the same job. Good word for you preachers out there.

I want you to notice he was given power that he might do the work that his father had given him to do and finish it, which was the giving of eternal life to as many as the father gave him. Then in his prayer for the apostles, I want you to notice how it finishes. Verse 18, As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

What to do? For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. Why is he praying? Where is the climax in his prayer for his apostles that others may believe? This is a continuation of the work that the father gave him to do through the apostles.

So why is he praying for them? And it's a tremendous prayer for them. Ultimately that there might be the continuation of the proclamation of the truth that others might believe. Why was he sent into the world? That sinners might have eternal life.

Why is he praying for the apostles? That they might go out into the world as witnesses that sinners might have eternal life. And why is he praying for his church? That they all may be one. And why is the glory

which the father gave him, given them that they may be one, even as we are one? Why? That the world may believe.

They have the climax in his praying for himself, for his apostles, and for the church. The unity of the body. What should dominate our praying? It should culminate in the glory of God through the salvation of sinners.

That's it. In each case it is so here. He prays for himself, why? For the glory of God through the salvation of sinners, that he should give eternal life to as many as the father had given him.

He prays for the apostles and how does he culminate? That there might be those who believe because of their word, because of their witness. He prays for the unity of the body, why? That the world may believe that the father has sent his son, that they may believe. When you pray for your child, what should be the culmination of your prayer? Heavenly father, that through his separation unto thyself, through his sanctification, through the manifestation of the living Christ in him, others might see Christ and believe.

Is that how you pray for your son? Is that how you pray for your daughter? Is that how you pray for your wife? Is that how you pray for your husband? Is that how you pray for the church or the fellowship where you assemble? There's a terrible danger of settling down into sinful self-satisfaction and becoming absorbed with that which contributes to my well-being and that little circle that concerns me most in this world, that is most un-Christlike. And our praying can very often finish with a desire merely for the well-being of the person we pray for, rather than through the answer to our prayer for them, God will be glorified through them, that others seeing them might see the Christ in them, and others hearing the word that goes forth from their lips in the power of the Spirit, might believe. That's the ultimate goal, the glorifying of our Lord in the salvation of sinners.

We must never forget that. Why do we constantly preach the need to strive together for the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace? In order that the Spirit of God through the body might be free to make increase of the body in love. And it's a wonderful thing at times, it's very rare, it's a very wonderful thing to go into an assembly or into a church and as soon as you enter the door you're conscious of the presence of the Spirit of God.

I tell you in a church like that, it's hard for a sinner not to come under great conviction of sin. It's very difficult. Early this century there was a great moving of the Spirit in Ulster, actually primarily in the city of Belfast, through a great preacher, a very unusual preacher.

He once preached in Sydney, and you may have read some of the books by the jungle doctor, Dr. Paul White of Tanganyika. Dr. Paul White was a student at Sydney University, a medical student at the time, had no time for the things of God, but the first evening Nicholson preached, he said something like this to a congregation in a large church, he said, well as far as I'm concerned the Bishop of Sydney has no more grace than this lectern I'm leaning on. And Paul White read this and he said, my, any man that can say that, I must go and hear him.

So he went to hear him, he got saved the first night. Saved the first night. He said some, what many people thought were terrible things.

I remember one night in the city of Brisbane in Queensland, there was a certain man in a certain denomination who was a terror. Everybody quaked before him in that denomination. And he lived in an

outlying district and he had to catch the last train at a certain time.

And Nicholson was just about to make his appeal when this man, he didn't know him, stood up in the congregation and began to lead. And he said, there you are, you go you old sinner, dodging the appeal. On another occasion he was in one of the most prestigious churches in Sydney.

And he said, all you elders and deacons come up to the front. Didn't know what was going to happen. So when he got up to the front he said, pillars of the church, caterpillars.

This was Nicholson, this was Nicholson. But I tell you that man had more converts in the city of Sydney and more men preaching in pulpits than all the rest of the preachers combined over the 20 years that he had been to Sydney and his last visit. Preachers everywhere saved under Nicholson.

I remember the last time I heard him preach, he said I was in a butcher shop today. And I saw this ox tongue. He said the butcher took his knife and he cut that very rough surface, that outer edge off the tongue.

He said it was as smooth as silk. And I prayed on the spot in that butcher shop, dear Lord, never let them skin my tongue. Unusual man, only one Nicholson, only one Nicholson.

But God's man, God's man. Tremendous power of the Spirit when he preached. And in the midst of that great revival in Belfast, he was on his way to the meeting one evening and he met a great company of men marching away from the hall.

They were singing a hymn as they marched along. And he said to them, where are you going? They said, well, Mr. Nicholson, we felt we should leave our seats tonight for sinners to be able to come to the meeting. He said, if you don't go back, I'm not going.

What did he realize? That in that meeting, he needed those who really loved the Lord. In order that through the unity of the body of Christ in that place, there might be the manifestation of the power of the living Christ by His Spirit. He said, if you don't go, I don't go.

In one shipyard, they had to build a number of large sheds because the men were bringing back all the tools that they'd stolen. That's revival. That's revival.

That's the power of God. You never have a moving of God's Spirit until men and women come under tremendous conviction of sin. When He, the Spirit, has come, He will convict of sin.

The first thing He does. If there's no conviction of sin, He hasn't come. With power.

Our Lord's prayer is dominated by one thought. The glory of the Father. Even as His whole life was dominated by this one desire to do the will of His Father, to finish the work that He had sent Him into the world to do.

Now this was His ultimate objective, and this should be our ultimate objective. And I want to say again tonight, did you do today the work God gave you to do today? Did you? You say, well, Mr. Carroll, you see, I'm a businessman. That's right, you may be a businessman, but did you do today the work God gave you to do today? Two things certainly He requires of us every day, that by walking in fellowship with Him, those who see us should see Christ in us.

That's the first thing He gives you to do every day. And I want to tell you that if as a businessman you are merely grubbing around to make money, nobody's going to see much of Christ in you. That's impossible.

That's impossible. You might say, well, Mr. Carroll, I'm just a housewife. What do you mean just a housewife? That's a very noble calling.

Well, Mr. Carroll, I'm just a mother. A mother, is there any higher calling than a mother? I believe many mothers who have been faithful to their opportunity, where God has placed them, will receive greater rewards than many of the men whom we think are great leaders. The Lord Jesus requires of you every day, and He requires of me every day, that I walk in such fellowship with Him that others seeing me see something of Christ in me.

What else does He give you to do? That as the Spirit prompts you, you speak the word that the Spirit gives you to speak for the glory of the Lord Jesus. That's the work He has given you to do. Your business is incidental compared with that.

Why? Because your business, like everything in this world, is going to go up in smoke finally. Nothing left. I have finished the work which you gave me to do.

This is the ultimate objective, and we must never lose sight of it. The glorifying of God. But the glorifying of God first.

I am not unsympathetic with certain movements that make much of what is called soul winning. What I object to in many cases is that they do not make enough of exhibiting Christ in the life, or presenting Christ before you preach Christ. That somehow a person can be saved on a 1, 2, 3, 4 formula.

I am not convinced of that. The man who is used by God is the man who lives for one thing, and it's not the salvation of God. The man who is used of God is the man who lives for the glory of God.

And because he lives for the glory of God, the work that God gives him to do wherever he places him is done, because it's for the glory of God. It's not even for the salvation of the sinner. It's for the glory of God, who is glorified in the salvation of the sinner.

Now there is an important difference here. Any young person who goes out to a foreign field, idealistic, with a desire that people should be saved, very often runs into a certain type of person, and the devil can very easily convince them that they are not worth saving. They lie, they rob, they cheat, they are deceitful in certain countries.

You could give your life blood for them one day, and they could crucify you the next day. Children of the devil, just like some people in this. And the devil comes and he says it's not worth it.

It's not worth it. And the young missionary very often wobbles, and sometimes they quit. But if the young missionary goes to a foreign field to glorify God, in his body and spirit which are God's, he'll never quit.

Because he's there primarily for the glory of God, not for the salvation of sinners. And because he is there for the glory of God, in the will of God, those who are to be saved are saved. But he won't move.

He'll not be troubled. He'll not be turned aside. Why? Because he hasn't gone out there to save sinners.

He's gone out there to glorify God. And God is glorified when sinners are saved. But whether or not they respond, it's not going to move him, and he shouldn't move up.

When William Burns, the great Scottish preacher, who saw a tremendous revival under his preaching in Scotland, was called to China, a lady said to him, Mr. Burns, I suppose you're going out to China to convert the heathen. He said, No, ma'am. I'm going out to China to glorify God.

That's different. That was a fine point. It was a very important point.

Whatever God calls you to, He is calling you to that work to glorify Him, whatever it is. It may be motherhood. It may be as a housewife.

It may be as a businessman. It may be as a truck driver. It could be as a preacher, possibly a missionary.

But you make absolutely certain that what you're doing and what you're in, God has called you to it. Make certain of that. Make absolutely certain of it.

That's important. And don't try to fool the Lord because you're not going to fool Him. He knows.

And if you're not certain that what you are doing with the time that God has given you on this earth is not what He has called you to do, then, my dear brother and my sister, I believe you would do well to get on your knees tonight and ask Him what He wants you to do. And do it. Do it.

In that role which He has called you to, you are to glorify God. You've heard of Brother Lawrence, the famous Brother Lawrence, who, much to the amazement of his fellows, could work in a kitchen scrubbing pots and pans day after day after day, month after month, and always be bright and cheerful and joyous in Victoria. What was his secret? Brother Lawrence, he did everything to the glory of God.

Everything to the glory of God. If he scrubbed a pot, it was to the glory of God. If he scrubbed a floor, it was to the glory of God.

That's the key. Do everything to the glory of God. Hallelujah.

And if you do it, you'll receive a reward. Yes, you'll receive a reward. Even scrubbing a floor for the glory of God, you'll receive a reward from the Lord.

But you could preach for 20 years and never get any reward if it wasn't for the glory of God. Now, he said, Madam, I'm not going out to China to convert the heathen. I'm going out to China to glorify God.

Oh, my dear friends, this is a solemn prayer. Because basically, and we must face it today, people are self-centered. Self-centered.

I mean professing Christians. I mean so-called evangelical Christians are self-centered. I had a chat with a brother this afternoon about a certain matter and I said, now listen, my brother.

Do you know why you're getting nowhere and you will get nowhere? You are not appealing to the appropriate motive. And he said, what is that? I said, you'll not get anywhere until you appeal to the selfish motive. Because Christians today are basically self-oriented.

This is a tragedy. If there is something that will contribute to what they want for themselves or some loved ones, they are immediately involved. But if it's for somebody else, uh-uh.

Not the response. Not the response. They're basically self-centered.

This is a tragedy, but it's true. You announce any work of God that may be a far superior work of God, we will say to some dead church or half-dead church where a person worships, which is worthy of their time and support in every way. But I'll tell you where the support and the time goes into that half-dead church.

And some are fundamental and still half-dead. Basically self-centered. And I'm sure if the gentleman does what I tell him to do, there'll be a response.

My dear brother, my dear sister, unless we lose this self-centeredness and live for the glory of God and the glory of God alone and do what the Spirit tells us to do and the Spirit of God alone, we're going to be put to shame at the coming of Jesus Christ. Put to shame at the coming of Jesus Christ. A brother told me after last week's meeting two young couples that he brought with him were convinced I really didn't love my children.

And I didn't love my children because I had said we must die to our children. The only parent that loves his children is the parent that has died to his children. Do you know why? If you don't die to your children, you will make your children just what you are, self-centered.

If you don't love the Lord more than your wife, your husband, your son, your daughter, you're not worthy of Him. And the love which you need for your child is resurrection love, the power of a resurrected Christ in you to love them. Nothing less will suffice.

And until you die to your children, you will never operate on the resurrection side of the cross as far as your children are concerned. You'll always gravitate back to what the children want and what you want for the children and not what God wants. That's true and you know it.

So do I. And therefore you don't really love your children. You love yourself, not the children in the way God would have you to love. You die to your children.

They are not in the world that they might have what they want to have or you want them to have. They are in the world for one reason, to glorify God. That's all.

And the mother and the father are in the world for one reason, to glorify God. That's all. Nothing more, nothing less because there's nothing greater.

But that means an utter annihilation of all self-interest as far as you personally are concerned or as far as your children are concerned. They are Lord's children. They belong to Him.

He alone can give them to you. He alone can take them, ultimately. Why not die to them and let them be what the Lord wants them to be? We are in the world for one thing, to glorify God and only as we glorify Him in all that we do is the ultimate objective of life will we be able to say at the end I have finished the work which you gave me to do.

Now shall we pray? Holy Father, Thou knowest that these are very plain words but there are times Thou knowest when we need plain speech. We long for a great outpouring of Thy Spirit in our midst. The coming of the Spirit of God with power.

And our Father, we confess to Thee that this prayer is ultimately completely beyond us. We do not begin to even understand its depth. But we thank Thee for what we do understand.

And we see this tremendous objective of the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, whom God had sent into the world, unique God and man, never swerving, never deviating, never turning aside from seeking Your glory. Even knowing that ultimately this meant the cross with its shame and with its sins and with its rejection. O Lord, give us a single eye for Thy glory so that we can go out into this night and into tomorrow if Thy Son should tarry with one desire only that You will be glorified in us by what we are, by what we do, by what we say.

That our children and all who concern us shall be taught one thing primarily above all others that they're in this world to glorify God and not to please themselves. O Lord, write on our hearts those truths which Thy Spirit Himself knows we need and give us grace to live by them. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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