

**Intro:**

In John's gospel we have a unique prayer of our Lord on the occasion of the raising of Lazarus. This event occurred just a few months before the crucifixion.

The prayer we will look at seems almost incidental – it is somewhat obscured in our reading by our attention on the tremendous occasion of the raising of Lazarus. All our attention, with the crowd, is fixed on the door of the tomb, where Jesus is about to order the door to be opened.

Read Jn 11.41-42

Thus we have the prayer. It is a rather simple prayer on the surface, but it contains several lessons for us if we will take the time to think it out.

I have entitled the message:

*A Prayer of Witness*

The idea of witness comes because of the Lord's stated purpose and because the prayer was audible.

This particular prayer is one of only a very few prayers that the Lord prayed audibly for an audience wider than his disciples. He intends for it to communicate something about himself as a prelude to what he was about to do in raising Lazarus.

**Proposition:** The Lord's intention in public prayer is to witness truth concerning his relationship to the Father; our intention should be to witness truth concerning our relationship to Him as well.

## **I. The Lord's dependence on the Father**

- A. The prayers of Jesus in general revealed something: he was a man entirely dependent on the Father
  - 1. A committed spirit
  - 2. A dependent walk

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| <p>We know the theology of the relationship between Father and Son, but don't miss this part, the unique subordination willingly entered by the incarnate [God made flesh / God-man] Son of God.</p> |
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B. This prayer in particular highlights the relationship of dependence

1. The upward look – “a gesture of looking away from self and toward God”<sup>1</sup>

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Psalm 123:1 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

<sup>2</sup> Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters, *and* as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

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2. The word of address: “Father”
  - a. Main title for God in John’s Gospel
  - b. Main title for us as Christians in our walk with God, we think of Him as our ‘heavenly Father’
  - c. It is in Jesus Christ that we come to know God in this way

“It is his relationship with God that a Christian enters into and thus comes to know God as Jesus knows him, within the limitations of human nature.”<sup>2</sup>

3. The confidence of the thanksgiving: Jesus believed the Father had already heard him

One man defined prayer this way: “the conscious realization of the divine will”<sup>3</sup>

- a. The Lord was in constant prayer with the Father
- b. The Lord was in complete submission to the Father
- c. The Lord was in a state of settled, conscious, realization of God’s will

I am not expecting to have a settled confidence in my prayers that I will someday raise a dead person!

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<sup>1</sup> “Jesus Raises Lazarus”

<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/index.php?action=getCommentaryText&cid=4&source=1&seq=i.50.11.2> (Accessed 6/15/08).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Westcott, p. 173

- But I do have an intense interest in pursuing a walk with the Father that I might have a confidence in His will as I pray.

Prayer is an expression of humble dependence on the Father in faith for all things we ask of him. Our prayers should communicate that to us, and to those who hear us.

## II. The Lord's standing with the Father

- A. God hears the prayers of the righteous, not the unrighteous
- B. By this prayer, Jesus claims a righteous standing with the Father
  1. It is one thing to claim this; anyone could
  2. But the importance here is that the claim is made before the miracle is wrought
  3. The point of the miracle is not the power of Jesus, but the standing of Jesus with the Father

“Jesus lives in constant prayer and communication with his Father. When he engages in vocal prayer, he is not entering, as we do, from a state of non-praying into prayer. He is only giving overt expression to what is the ground and base of his life all along. He emerges from non-vocal to vocal prayer here in order to show that the power he needs . . . for the raising of Lazarus . . . depends on the gift of God. It is through that prayer and communion and constant obedience to his Father's will that he is the channel of the Father's saving action.”<sup>4</sup>

Though our standing is not the *same*, our public praying should reflect our personal standing in Christ [imputed righteousness] – the grounds of our petitions and hopes of our answers.

## III. The Lord's identification with the Father

- A. The people are about to be very, very, very impressed with Jesus (who wouldn't be?)

<sup>4</sup> Fuller 1963:107, quoted in “Jesus Raises Lazarus” <http://www.biblegateway.com...>

- B. Jesus prayed for those ‘standing around’ so that they might believe the message he has been preaching
1. He comes from the Father
  2. He does the Father’s will

The people are to be impressed with this relationship by the raising of Lazarus.

You should be so impressed with the relationship that you should seek to emulate it, especially in your prayers.

“It is not the setting up of the will of self, but the apprehension and taking to self of the divine will, which corresponds with the highest good of the individual.”<sup>5</sup>

#### IV. The Lord’s expectation for the Hearers

- A. By uttering this prayer, Jesus is offering grace for belief
- B. The belief Jesus wants to inspire brings with it eternal life

Lazarus and his sisters already believe — the miracle was not done for them, but for the crowd [lit., ‘the ordinary people’, ‘the common people’]

- C. A key to this belief for this crowd is this prayer

Again, we have no expectation of new attempts to raise the dead. But we can have an expectation that our public prayers can communicate gospel truths.

- Dependence on the Father
- Our relationship with the Father
- Our submission to the Father
- Our life from the Father

#### Conclusion:

What you pray and how you pray says something to others about your relationship with the Father.

If you are unwilling to pray out loud in front of others, your unwillingness speaks loudly about your relationship with the Father.

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<sup>5</sup> Westcott, p. 173