

John 17:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Analysis

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word—Jesus expands His high priestly prayer beyond the eleven disciples to include all future believers. The Greek *pisteuontōn* (πιστευόντων, "those who will believe") is a present participle emphasizing continuous, ongoing faith across generations. The phrase **through their word** (διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν) establishes apostolic testimony as the foundation for Christian faith—we believe because of the eyewitness proclamation preserved in Scripture.

This verse demolishes any notion that Jesus prayed only for an elite spiritual class. Every believer from Pentecost to the present age stands included in Christ's intercession. The phrase *dia tou logou* ("through the word") underscores the instrumental means of saving faith: the proclaimed and written gospel. As Paul later wrote, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Historical Context

Jesus spoke this prayer in the upper room on the night of His betrayal (c. AD 30), hours before His crucifixion. The eleven disciples present (Judas had left) would soon become the apostolic witnesses whose testimony—first oral, then written in the New Testament—would be the means by which all subsequent generations come to faith.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does knowing Christ prayed specifically for you (as a future believer) affect your assurance of salvation?
2. What responsibility do believers bear to faithfully transmit "their word"—the apostolic gospel—to the next generation?

Interlinear Text

Oὐ	περὶ	τούτων	δὲ	έρωτῷ	μόνον	ἀλλὰ	καὶ	περὶ
G3756	for	these	G1161	pray I	G3440	but	them also	for
	G4012	G5130		G2065		G235	G2532	G4012
τῷν	πιστευσόντων	διὰ	τοῦ	λόγου	αὐτῷν	εἰς	ἐμέ	
G3588	which shall believe	through	G3588	word	their	on	me	
	G4100			G3056	G846	G1519	G1691	

Additional Cross-References

Acts 2:41 (Word): Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 4:4 (Faith): Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Ephesians 4:11 (Parallel theme): And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Romans 16:26 (Faith): But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

