

"The Guarantee of a Successful Atonement" Part 1

John 12:20-26

Theme: Jesus assures us that His work on the cross will successfully redeem sinful men.

Introduction: What makes a guarantee worth trusting? We have all heard promises that sounded reassuring until it was time to fulfill them. A guarantee is only as dependable as the one who makes it—and as the one's ability to deliver on what was promised.

For instance, what gives a piece of paper money its value? A banknote may be beautifully printed, but the paper itself is worth very little. Its purchasing power depends on what backs it.

Under the gold standard, a nation's currency was tied to a fixed quantity of gold. When notes were redeemable in gold, holders could exchange a paper promise for something of recognized value. Confidence in that promise depended on the issuer's ability and willingness to honor it. The words printed on the note needed substance behind them.

Paper money has value today because of **public confidence, widespread acceptance, and the institutions that support it**. Modern currencies, such as the dollar, are *fiat money*: they are not redeemable for a fixed amount of gold. People accept them because they expect others to accept them in exchange for goods and services. Confidence in the issuing government and the central bank helps sustain that trust.

That raises a question far more significant than our money: What underlies the promise of our salvation? When we face the guilt of our sin and the certainty of death, what gives us confidence that we can be reconciled to God?

Our assurance rests on the character of God and on the redeeming work of His Son. Jesus would pay the price of our redemption with His own life, and His resurrection would demonstrate His victory over sin and death.

In John 12, Jesus approaches the cross and speaks with certainty about what His death will accomplish. The grain of wheat will fall into the earth and die—and it will bear much fruit. Here is a promise grounded in the Father's faithfulness and the Son's sufficient sacrifice: His work on the cross will bring redemption to sinful people.

That question takes on eternal significance when we consider our salvation. How can sinful people be reconciled to a holy God? How can our guilt be removed, the power of sin broken, and eternal life become our certain hope? Our confidence must rest on someone who can accomplish our redemption.

In John 12, Jesus stands just days from the cross. Opposition is mounting, His suffering is approaching, and some Greeks arrive with a simple request: "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Jesus responds that His hour has come. He then speaks of a grain of wheat that must fall into the earth and die before it bears much fruit.

Jesus knows what His death will accomplish. Even as His soul is troubled by what lies ahead, He speaks with certainty of the harvest to come. The Father will be glorified. Satan's power will be broken. Sinners will be drawn to the Savior.

This passage assures us that Jesus' work on the cross will redeem sinful people. Our hope rests in the Savior who willingly went to the cross, knowing that His sacrifice would accomplish the Father's purpose. We will see: 1. The Priority of Reconciliation, 2. The Principle of Regeneration, 3. The Provision of Relief, and 4. The Power of the Resurrection. All of this shows that **Jesus assures us His work on the cross will redeem sinful men.**

Let us begin by considering the priority of reconciliation, seen in the arrival of these Greeks who wished to see Jesus.

I. The Priority of Reconciliation – *12:20-23*

A. The Sensitizing of the Sinner – *vv. 20-21*

1. At the time when the Jewish people were most responsible to open their hearts to the Messiah, they were asserting their own priorities, attempting to make Him into something other than what He truly was.

2. This response by them grieved Him – the people He came to accepted Him only on their own conditions.

3. In contrast to the Jewish people, ***"there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these then came to Philip … and began to ask him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus'."***

4. These were likely Gentile proselytes to Judaism – having come to realize that the Greek sophistry provided no relief to the dark and lost condition of the soul.

5. In that we are told that left to themselves, "there is none who seeks for God" (***Romans 3:11***), these men had obviously been drawn to Christ by the Spirit of God.

   a) *We don't know exactly how this happened; perhaps they witnessed Jesus's entry into Jerusalem several days earlier.*

   b) *In that faith comes by hearing the Word of God (**Romans 10:17**), at some point they had heard someone proclaim the good news about Jesus – possibly the testimony of one of the eyewitnesses to the raising of Lazarus – cp. **v. 17**.*

6. This foreshadows God's work, in which the Gentiles would become the primary focus of God's redemption as God builds His church.

   a) ***Acts 15:7*** *– "the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe."*

   b) ***Ephesians 2:13-15*** *– God "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" between Jew and Gentile.*

   c) ***Acts 9:15-16; Acts 13:46-49*** *– Paul was chosen to be a "light for the*

Gentiles."

7. Scripture tells us that this alternate focus of God, on the Gentiles, will be temporary until a future time when the fullness of the Gentiles has come - ***Romans 11:25-29***.

8. We are not sure why the "Greeks" chose Philip:

   a) *However, we are told he was **"from Bethsaida of Galilee,"** a region inhabited by many Gentiles.*

   b) *It may also be because **"Philip"** was a Greek name.*

9. A question you could ask yourself at this point is, "Would someone unfamiliar with our church – or even our faith – feel comfortable enough with your interactions to ask for help?"

10. Here we see sinners who know they are in need, are sensitized to their condition, and seek relief by coming to Christ Jesus, demonstrating the universal demand, by Jew & Gentile alike, for the grace of God found in Christ Jesus.

11. Our desire is that the warmth we show others, the passion we display for Christ, and the integrity and authenticity of our lives would encourage people who lack faith in Christ to come to us with questions and for guidance in finding Christ.

B. The Sensitivity of the Savior – *vv. 22-23*

1. Before this, Jesus had clearly limited His ministry to the Jewish people – cf. ***Matthew 15:23***.

2. The ***"Greeks"*** [**Ἕλλην**] - were unsure how the Lord would respond to their overture – would He reject them or accept them?

3. Again, we see that they go through one of the disciples, whom they believe would be the most "friendly" – ***"Philip."***

4. It appears that Philip isn't sure about it either – ***"Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus."***

5. A believer who feels unable to answer a difficult question can seek help from another Christian. One person may build trust, another may explain the gospel, and another may provide ongoing care. Asking for help can serve the seeker well.

6. They approach the Lord with a certain timidity, having been wrong before about Jesus' desire to attend to a particular group of people, cp. the issue of children – ***Mark 10:13-14***.

7. Jesus's response is interesting – it triggers in Him an overwhelming

awareness of the scope and impact of the sufferings He is about to endure – ***"And Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'"***

a) This is a major pivot, a moment when the pathway to the cross reaches a "runaway effect" – the threshold beyond which redemption cannot be stopped or reversed.

*b) This is the first time **"the hour"** is said to be present – previously "it had not yet come."*

8. In light of Jesus's celebrated entry into Jerusalem, the disciples, among others, were likely elated to hear Jesus's words, recognizing that the reference to ***"the Son of Man"*** recalls Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah's glory in establishing the Kingdom – cp. ***Daniel 7:13-14***.

9. The arrival of these Greeks signals that His redemptive love extends to the whole world, not just the Jewish people who were actively rejecting Him – cp. ***John 1:12***.

10. The need for men to be reconciled to God through Christ's work is a universal problem that transcends races, cultures, classes, genders, and heritages.

11. The Gentiles have always been on the heart of God – throughout the Old Testament:

*a) In the Law: through the Abrahamic Covenant – **Genesis 12:3**.*

*b) In the Prophets: In the Messianic Prophecies – **Isaiah 11:10**.*

*c) In the Writings: in the salvation of the world - **Psalm 98:2-3**.*

12. Jesus sets His eye on the prize, the redemption of a lost world whom He would reconcile to the Father, the means of His glorification, cp. ***Philippians 2:8-11; Hebrews 12:2***.

II. The Principle of Regeneration – *12:24-26*

A. The Indication of the Savior's Devotion – *v. 24*

1. In these verses, Jesus shatters the disciples' preconceptions that He would oust Rome and immediately fulfill the Davidic Covenant.

2. Jesus would certainly be glorified, but through death and resurrection, the cross was why Jesus came: to provide peace with God through the atonement.

3. Jesus is emphasizing that His death will bring forth a people whose new spiritual lives are marked by allegiance to Him.

4. The prize toward which Jesus looked causes Him to look at the immediate hour – the hour of accomplishment.

5. He thus embarks on a synopsis of how this glory is to be gained – through incomparable suffering – ***"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."***

6. First, the ***"fruit"*** [**καρπός**] refers to the "outcome" or product of something, and here it is the glory to be received at the hour of victory.

7. This fruit of glory is twofold:

   a) *First, it restores the previous status as the 2nd Person of the Triune God, cf.* ***John 17:5****.*

   b) *Second, it is the accolades gained by bringing many into glory with Him – cp.* ***Revelation 5:9-10; Ephesians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 2:14****.*

8. Also, notice that the avenue He must travel is likened to a planted seed's germination, demanding death and ultimately life.

9. This clearly pictures the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, who becomes the "first fruits" of those who would thereafter believe in Him.

10. Once again, Jesus demonstrates the depth of His devotion not only to the Father by perfectly obeying Him, but also to sinners by willingly laying down His life.

11. In essence, Jesus promises success through His death: His atonement will bear fruit.

So What?

1. **What would cause someone seeking Jesus to feel comfortable approaching me? What in my conduct would encourage—or discourage—them?**
2. **What evidence in my priorities and choices shows that Christ has given me new life?**
3. **How can the principle of the seed falling into the ground and dying, then producing life play itself out in my life?**

"The Guarantee of a Successful Atonement"
Part 2

John 12:20-26

Introduction: Last time we were here in John 12, we heard the request of some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem to worship: ***"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."*** Their words brought us to the heart of our Lord's mission—the reconciliation of sinners to God.

In verses 20–26, the arrival of Greeks seeking Jesus stands in striking contrast to the Jewish people's unbelief and signals the universal scope of Christ's redemptive mission. We called this the Priority of Reconciliation**.** Their desire to see Jesus prompts His declaration that the hour of His glorification has come—not through the immediate establishment of His earthly kingdom, as the disciples anticipated, but through His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. Using the illustration of a grain of wheat that must die to bear fruit, Jesus reveals that His death is essential to reconciling many sinners with God. We called this **the Principle of Regeneration**. Thus, the cross becomes the ultimate demonstration of His devotion to the Father and His love for sinners, and how He will secure a redeemed people for His glory.

First, we saw the *Indication of the Savior's devotion* in v. 24**:** He would willingly give His life so that others might live. But what does that harvest look like? What happens in the lives of those who receive the life His death provides? That is where we resume this morning.

In verses 25–26, Jesus moves from His own self-giving to the changed allegiance of those who belong to Him. The Savior who lays down His life gathers followers who surrender their lives to His lordship. His death produces a people who learn to treasure Him above their comfort, their reputation, their security—even their continued life in this world.

We will consider this under *the Indication of the Sinner's Deliverance*. The grace that reconciles us to God begins to reorder what we love, what we pursue, and whom we serve. Jesus joins this costly calling to two precious promises: His servants will be with Him, and His Father will honor them.

Then, in verses 27–28a, we will hear something deeply moving from the Savior Himself: ***"Now My soul has become troubled."*** The One who calls us to follow Him into costly obedience understands its anguish. With the cross before Him, He brings His troubled soul to the Father and prays, ***"Father, glorify Your name."*** Under the Provision of Relief, we will consider the confidence and submission expressed in that prayer.

Finally, in verses 28b–33, the Father answers from heaven, and Jesus announces what His approaching death will accomplish: judgment upon this world, the overthrow of its ruler, and the drawing of people to Himself. Under the Power of the Resurrection, we will consider the victory of the crucified and risen Savior, remembering that Jesus speaks here directly of being "lifted up" on the cross.

The movement of this passage takes us from the Savior's death to the sinner's changed life, through the Savior's anguish to the announcement of His victory. As we listen, we must ask: Has the Savior we profess to trust become the Lord we follow? And when following Him becomes costly, will we trust the One whose *own* path through suffering brought life to us?

B. The Indication of the Sinner's Deliverance – *vv. 25-26*

1. The cross may look like the termination of Jesus' ministry, but it is how His

saving mission bears its harvest; but what exactly is this ***"fruit?"***

2. Jesus immediately refers to those who would benefit from the atonement – they would be powerfully changed out of a life of sin and death into a life of changed priority – ***"He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal."***

3. This is not a condition to be met before salvation is granted; it is evidence that one has truly been born again by the Spirit of God, and that his life has changed.

4. This statement needs closer examination:

   a) ***"He who loves his life …"*** [**ψυχή**] – *can describe the center of one's identity (psychē) and refers to the person who clings to "respectability," reputation, or even the sinful pleasures or indulgences in the course of this world and the desires of the flesh and the mind – cp.* ***Ephesians 2:1-3****.*

   b) ***"… loses it, …"*** [**ἀπόλλυμι**] – *describes the consequence of being separated or disconnected for being one who practices lawlessness – cp.* ***Matthew 7:23****.*

   c) ***"… and he who hates his life in this world …"*** – [**μισέω**] *describes the person who has a strong aversion or disdain for who he is* ***"in this world"*** *and thus repents of his sinfulness, changing his mind and dying to self-indulgence – cp.* ***Romans 6:4-11****.*

   d) ***"… will keep it to life eternal."*** [**φυλάσσω**] – *describes the guarding or protecting it from the judgment, resulting in the blessing of eternal life enjoyed by those who are in Christ Jesus.*

5. Jesus then makes a clear analogy to Himself - just as Jesus gives His life in loving obedience to the Father for the salvation of sinners, His servants must follow Him in obedient, self-giving love: ***"If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor Him."***

6. These promises, made by Jesus, are precious to all who ***"follow"*** Jesus:

   a) *First,* ***"where I am, there My servant will be also …"*** *– cp.* ***John 14:3; John 8:21****.*

   b) *Also,* ***"if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor Him"*** *– faithful service to Jesus brings a reward of glory – cp.* ***2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:6-9****.*

7. The transforming effects of Christ's saving work become visible as sinners turn from self-rule to follow Him.

8. Their obedience does not establish their acceptance with God; it bears witness to the grace they have received.

9. Those who belong to Christ are called into costly service, sustained by His promise that they will be with Him and honored by His Father.

III. The Provision of Relief – *12:27-28a*

A. The Provocation of the Request – *v. 27*

1. As Jesus considers the essence of His redemptive mission, He cannot overlook the reality of sin's price, namely death.

2. Even as His followers would know great struggle and hardship, Jesus's struggle was real – He was indeed human, and His understanding of what lay before Him gives greater weight to His being the One who calls His disciples to surrender their lives – He understands the cost of that surrender.

3. Jesus knew exactly what awaited Him and was absolutely resolved to suffer under God's wrath – cf. ***Isaiah 50:6-7***.

4. The death mandated by our sin transcends mere physical death – Jesus' anguish encompassed the terrible suffering before Him and, supremely, the burden of giving Himself for sinners under divine judgment.

5. This is what compels Christ to acknowledge, ***"Now My soul has become troubled."*** [**ταράσσω**] – to be stirred up, unsettled, or shaken – cp. ***John 11:33***.

   *a) Jesus is not primarily vexed by the pain he would have to endure at the hands of men – cp. **Matthew 10:28**.*

   *b) Jesus shows He knows exactly what He will face as He suffers for the sins of men, the ultimate price of sin: separation from the Father - cp. **Mark 15:34**.*

6. Although Jesus's soul is deeply ***"troubled,"*** it is not divided; He is not "on the bubble" about whether He wants to go through with it!

7. What carried Jesus through this time? – It was His sure hope that the Father would not abandon Him in the grave but would restore Him to the glory of Heaven – cp. ***Acts 2:24-28***.

8. This is a quote from one of the most profound Messianic Psalms – ***Psalm 16:8-11*** – in which the suffering Messiah is promised that God would remain faithful to Him from death to resurrection.

9. I believe that it was about this very deliverance that Jesus called upon God to provide Him – thereby strengthening Him to endure whatever He might face – ***"… and what shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour?"***

10. This statement essentially declares that to ask God to avoid the cross is an unthinkable capitulation that would contradict the entire reason He had

come as a man.

11. Jesus then reminds Himself and those around Him that instead of allowing His troubled soul to cause Him to avoid what He was to face, it was ***"for this purpose I came to this hour."***

12. He thereby declares that He would not turn aside from carrying out God's will regarding men's redemption; He had ***a face like flint***.

13. The Savior's troubled soul reveals the depth of His suffering, while His prayer reveals the steadfastness of His obedience.

14. He faced the cross with full awareness of its terrible cost and complete confidence in the Father's faithfulness.

15. His supreme desire was that the Father's character be displayed through the accomplishment of redemption.

16. In Him, believers find both the sufficient Savior who bore their judgment and the compassionate Lord who understands their anguish and teaches them to pray.

B. The Priority of the Request – *v. 28a*

1. This brings us to the priority behind His resolute commitment to accomplishing redemption: ultimately, to see the Father glorified, ***"Father, glorify Your name."***

2. ***"glorify"*** [**δοξάζω**] – lit. means "**to influence one's opinion about another so as to enhance the latter's reputation"**[1]

3. This was Jesus' ultimate goal: to bring glory to the Father, something He devoted His entire life to accomplishing - cp. ***John 17:4-5***.

4. We recognize that this was most clearly demonstrated on the cross, where God was glorified through the display of justice and grace, and where Jesus Christ's atonement provided redemption for men.

5. Jesus was fully surrendered to the Father's will in *everything* He did – including the Father's purposes for the redemption of Men – cp. ***Matthew 26:39, 42***.

6. In these verses, Jesus declares that whatever God desired was acceptable to Him and calls on God to fulfill His Word and display His character by remaining faithful to Jesus, bringing Him through suffering to the resurrection and the ascension.

[1] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 258.

7. Jesus's heart is displayed here in submission to the Father – ***to the point that*** even if the Father's will was to allow the Holy One to see corruption by leaving Him in the grave without glory, He was willing to do so (cp. Moses and Paul's willingness to be damned if it meant the salvation of Israel).

8. In addition, we recognize that through the resurrection, God exalted Jesus with power and glory, cf. ***Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28***.

IV. The Power of the Resurrection – *12:28b-33*

A. The Reassurances by the Father – *vv. 28b-29*

1. In response to Jesus' request that the Father glorify Himself by delivering Jesus through His death, ***"There came a voice out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'"***

2. Essentially, the Father states that the same faithfulness shown to the Son of God will endure through the proper and successful accomplishment of redemption.

   a) *Just as the Father has glorified Himself through the life of Christ, the Father will glorify Himself in the death of Christ.*

   b) *The life of Jesus had been completely satisfactory to the Father – meeting the just demands of holiness so that the Father would be glorified – cp.* ***Matthew 5:16; cp. John 2:11 & John 11:4, 40***.

   c) *Whether Jesus ate, drank, or did anything else, He did it for God's glory.*

3. It is through this voice that God assures that what the Son was about to do would indeed be successful – it is the divine guarantee that His atonement would provide absolute and sufficient atonement for the sinfulness of men – both Jew and Gentile – cp. ***Hebrews 5:5-9***.

4. The people who were around Jesus didn't know exactly what had been said – ***"So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, 'An angel has spoken to Him.'"***

5. Everyone heard the voice of God, but to the sinners standing by, it sounded like thunder; no one understood – cp. ***Job 26:14***!

6. They heard the deafening noise, but without Jesus, they would never understand God.

B. The Reassurance by the Son – vv. 30-33

1. Jesus indicates that this voice was not for His benefit, but so they would know that the fulfillment of the mission of redemption had practical ramifications for their lives.

2. He declared: ***"This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes"*** –

providing the testimony that enables men to truly trust in the Lord Jesus, essentially the Word of God.

3. He then shares the Father's message by reassuring us of the ramifications that affect our lives.

   a) ***"Now judgment is upon this world …"*** *– by their hostility and rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ (something that had already occurred in the hearts of the people and only needed clarification), the world had condemned itself.*

   (1) The cross serves as the gavel, bringing condemnation, the instrument of judgment.

   (2) It is the determining factor on which each of our destinies rests – embracing the cross brings cleansing, while rejecting it brings eternal condemnation.

   b) ***"Now the ruler of this world will be cast out."*** *– this refers to the breaking of Satan's power over the world – that his stranglehold on the earth has been overthrown – cp.* ***1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14-15****.*

   c) He then presents the general reality of redemption and victory – ***"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die."***

4. Essentially, Jesus returns to the promise He made to Nicodemus that men would be saved by His vicarious suffering on the cross (the most shameful death known at the time) – ***John 3:14***.

5. This is a promise from the Father: if Jesus died[2] (as He was going to), all who believe and come to Him would be redeemed.

6. The resurrection declares victory, bringing glory to the Son and the Father.

So What?

1. **If the glory of the Father mattered more to Jesus than escaping the cross, what matters more to me than glorifying God?**

2. **Since my sin was serious enough to require the death of God's Son, why am I so willing to excuse it in my own life?**

3. **If Christ is the One who draws sinners to Himself, what keeps me from confidently proclaiming His gospel to those who need Him?**

4. **Since the cross is the decisive revelation of God's judgment and**

[2] This is a 3rd Class Greek conditional clause (**ean** + aorist subjunctive) indicating that it was a future event and therefore referred to as a "probability."

grace, what does my response to Jesus Christ reveal about my eternal destiny?