

We're going to be looking at the first three verses of John chapter 17. On his deathbed in 1572, the great Scottish reformer John Knox asked his wife to read this very chapter to him where he says, I cast my first anchor.

And so we come to one of the most profound passages in all of scripture, that prayer that the son of God offered up to the father after the upper room discourse with his disciples. Matthew Henry remarks that this prayer was a prayer after sermon. It was a prayer after sacrament. It was a family prayer, a parting prayer, a prayer before sacrifice, a prayer that was a specimen of Jesus Christ intercession.

In fact, if we want a specific example of how the Lord Jesus Christ intercedes for his dearly chosen people, we need look no further than here at John 17, for we have here the only long prayer of the Lord Jesus that the Holy Spirit has recorded for our instruction. Yes, that Jesus often prayed, we know full well from many passages in the Gospels, but this is the only prayer of such a length that we have reported. It is the prayer of one who prayed as no one else ever prayed, of one who spoke as no one else ever spoke, the prayer of the second person of the Trinity to the Father.

It is the prayer of one whose office as our great high priest is to make intercession for his people. In fact, FF Bruce says, that to call this prayer our Lord's high priestly prayer is quite fitting. For our Lord in this prayer consecrates or sets himself apart for the sacrifice in which he is simultaneously both priest and victim. Herman Ritterbos calls it a farewell prayer, since Jesus prays this prayer in the hearing of his disciples, and he offers unto God the finishing of his work on earth, and he looks forward now to going to the cross.

The Lord Jesus made this prayer on an especially interesting occasion, just after the Lord's Supper, just after a most striking discourse with his disciples, just before his betrayal and crucifixion. just before the disciples forsook him and fled, just at the end of his earthly ministry. And this prayer of Jesus's, we must confess, is singularly full of deep and profound expressions, so deep indeed that we have no line to fully fathom them. And so the wisest Christian will always confess that there are things here that he cannot fully explain or grasp.

However, this prayer is recorded for the edification of all believers, for it gives us a glimpse into the very heart of the one who prays and intercedes always for you, his child. Before I read the passage and before I preach on it, let's pray and ask for God's help.

Father, we are a needy people. Father, I am a needy man who comes before you now, and I pray that, Father, you would first of all forgive us of our sins, that you would clear our eyes and our ears, that you would unstopp them, Lord God, and that you would give us the grace to see and to hear wonderful things from your law. Lord, your word is truth, and I pray now that you would sanctify us in that truth and that you would equip us, Lord, to appreciate all that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, especially in going to the cross and providing eternal life for all who would believe on him. Come now and make yourself known among us by the power of your spirit. But we pray it all in Jesus great and precious name. Amen.

Beginning in John chapter 17 at verse 1. When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son that the son may glorify you, since you have given him authority

over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. Amen and amen.

Today we're going to focus on the first three verses of this chapter of John 17. And to look at this passage more closely today, I first of all want you to see the glorious hour that had now arrived for our Lord Jesus Christ. the glorious hour that had now arrived for our Lord Jesus. Secondly, I want you to see the grand account of our Savior's office and authority, the grand account of our Savior's office and authority. And finally, I want you to see the great definition of eternal life, according to our Redeemer himself, the great definition of eternal life, according to our Redeemer himself.

But first of all, I want you to see this morning the glorious hour that had now come for our Lord Jesus and a more important hour we could not imagine, not only for Jesus, but for all of humanity. Jesus says, and look here with me at the text, Jesus says here in verse one, Father, the hour has come. What does he mean by that? Well, the hour here named in verse one is that hour appointed in God's eternal counsels for the sacrifice of the death of Christ and for the final accomplishment of his atonement for sinners. It was and still is the central event of all history.

I want you to think about it. Everything that had happened in time and space heretofore was leading up to this very moment according to God's sovereign design. This time, which had been promised by God, and expected by believers for 4,000 years, ever since Adam's fall, had it last arrived. And the seed of the woman was actually about to bruise the serpent's head by going to the cross and dying a sinful man's substitute and redeemer.

Jesus had spoken earlier of this hour before in John 12, verses 23 and 27, where he said this, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. And for this cause, I have come to this hour. You see, up to this very night, however, the hour was not yet come, as John 7.30 and 8.20 tell us. And until it had come, our Lord's enemies could not hurt or touch Jesus at all. Think of the numerous times in the Gospels, for example, in which Christ's enemies sought to arrest or even kill him. But Jesus, through the supernatural power and protection of the Father, was able to elude their deadly grasp.

I especially think of that time that he preached in his own hometown of Nazareth. And the people, who were so enraged at what he said, drove him out of the city to the brow of the hill and were threatening to throw him over and to kill him. But God the Father intervened and by his power and protection, he allowed Jesus to walk straight through them, eluding their grasp. But now at last, the hour had arrived and the sacrifice was ready to be offered.

And I want to apply this to us as well as believers, because I want you to see that in a much lower sense, but just as truly, Believers themselves who belong to Christ are all immortal until their hour appointed by God for death arrives. And until then, they are safe and cannot be hurt by death. That is, you as a believer are safe and secure until God's appointed time for you, his child, arrives. And even then, even then, when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, You are always in the hands of the one who has loved you and given himself for you.

But the hour for the sacrifice of Jesus had now come. And what was the ultimate purpose for this hour? Well, we must see and understand, as David Irving, our brother, so eloquently preached several weeks ago at the Reformation Legacy Conference, that the glory of God and the glory of His attributes is the grand end of all creation

and of all God's arrangements and providences throughout life, especially now as it pertained to the death of His Son at the hands of wicked and sinful men.

Brothers and sisters, this hour of Jesus's suffering and sacrifice was for the glory of God, as the text points out. And nothing brought such glory to God in all of creation as the completion of the redeeming work of Christ by his death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

Coming to this hour, Jesus now says, and look at it with me in the text, Jesus now says at the end of verse 1, glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you. What is Jesus asking here? Our Lord Jesus here seems to be asking that His death may at once take place. that He through death may be taken up to glory, and that there in glory the justice, holiness, mercy, and faithfulness of the Father may be glorified and exhibited to all creation, and that many souls may at once be saved and glorify the divine wisdom and power of Almighty God.

For you see, it was God's matchless, unfathomable wisdom that enabled the Father at this point to be both just and the justifier of Him who believes in His Son, as Paul tells us in Romans. That is, in the sacrifice of His only begotten Son at the cross, God could both be just and true to His holy nature in punishing man's sin forever, and at the same time He could justify or declare righteous all who put their trust in Christ our substitute for salvation.

We sang it just a moment ago from John Newton's great hymn, Let Us Wonder. Grace and justice join and point to mercy's store. When through grace in Christ our trust is, justice smiles and asks no more. He who washed us with his blood has secured our way to God.

You see, God's grace and justice came together perfectly at the cross. And as a result, in a manner that we could not fully fathom, God and his Son were truly glorified. St. Augustine remarks here, some take the father's glorifying the son to consist in this, that he spared him not, but delivered him up for us all.

But if God be said to be glorified by his passion or suffering, how much more by his resurrection when he The father declared that he accepted what the son had done on our behalf. Think of it, brothers and sisters. God spared not his only son, but he gave him up unto death and to the pangs of hell for sinners such as you and I. Amazing love.

And not only that, Jesus willingly went to that cross, enduring it, despising the shame of it for the glory and the joy that was set before him. And do you know what that glory and joy was? It was the glory and joy of redeeming a people for himself for all eternity. A people that includes a number of you and me who believe in his precious name.

Jesus, even then, as he went to the cross, knew the ones that he was going to die for. And as F.F. Bruce says right here, the cross, Jesus knew full well, was to be the vehicle of that glory. And Jesus prays that he may so accept it as to bring glory to his father in turn. Jesus had said earlier in John 12, 32, And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. Therefore, in this is the glory of God fully manifested. that Jesus being lifted up on the cross to die draws all those to himself in salvation who put their hope and their trust in him as savior of their souls,

even you and I who look to him by faith. The unimaginable love and glory of God is fully on display then in the sacrifice of his son for you and for me. Brothers and sisters, he delights in your being his for all eternity. And the glory of the Almighty King shines forth in your becoming more like Christ as you look to him by faith. And so I ask you this morning, never cease to praise the Father for such amazing love.

Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

But not only do I want you to see, first of all, the glorious hour that had come for Jesus, that leads us to the second point where we see in verse 2 the grand account of our Lord Jesus Christ's office and authority. Yes, the Lord Jesus had come to this hour to go to the cross, and the Father had brought his Son to this very hour of glory now for a specific reason and purpose. Look with me at verse 2. We read that the Father had given Jesus power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to all whom the Father had given him. Do you understand what he's saying here? Understand then that the keys of heaven and of life and of death are placed into Christ's hands by the Father Almighty, that the salvation of every soul of mankind is at Jesus' disposal. In other words, the Father has given to the Son the power or authority to grant eternal life to all whom the Father has given Him, to all who would believe in His name.

And I want you to see this, that the Father gives men and women and boys and girls to the Son for salvation in two ways or senses. One is eternal, in the purpose of His grace, from before the foundation of the world. And that is what is mainly meant here. That is God. And hear me when I say this. God knew you as his child from eternity past when he gave you to the son. And therefore, are you precious to the Savior in ways that you could not begin to fathom? Is that not an incredible thought? Ephesians 1.4, Paul confirms this when he says, He, God, chose us in him, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love.

But I also want you to see the second giving of men and women to the son by the father occurs in time and space. It's like the other side of the coin. It occurs in time and space when the father by his spirit draws his people to Christ in this life. As Jesus said in John 6:44, no one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him. Therefore, understand that the only reason that any of us, according to scripture, come to the Son in faith in the first place is because the Father draws you to himself by alluring you to Christ through the power of the irresistible spirit. That is his wonderfully irresistible grace.

I love the words that J.C. Ryle says right here. He says, Believers are given to Christ by the Father, according to an everlasting covenant made and sealed long before they were born, and then taken out from the world by the calling of the Spirit in due time. They are the Father's peculiar property, as well as the property of the Son. Their calling and election out of the world to be Christ's people, and not any foreseen merit of their own, is the real foundation of their character. You, if you are a believer here this morning, you are the father's peculiar property. You are the peculiar property of the son. And he called you before the foundation of the world to be his very own.

Brothers and sisters, these are very deep things which we should read with peculiar reverence and humility. They are deep things since they are the words of the Son addressed to the Father and handling matters about believers, which the eternal Trinity alone can handle with certainty.

All of the elect, including you who believe then, are first of all given from all eternity to the Son by the Father in the secret councils of heaven. to be redeemed by His blood and in due time in this life to be drawn by the Father to the Son and kept to eternal life. The Son therefore gives eternal life to none but those who are given to Him in the eternal councils of the Trinity from all eternity.

Yes, all people are invited to repent and believe without distinction. But only those who come to the Father through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit, putting their faith and trust in Christ for eternal life, shall be saved. Jesus says, no one who comes to me will I cast out. And that is a blessed, blessed truth. No one who comes to me will I cast out.

But if you are a true believer here today who has really repented and believed and has the Spirit of God, you may take great comfort in the thought that you were known and cared for and given to Christ by an eternal covenant long before you knew Christ or even cared for Him. And Christ says He gives such people eternal life.

A beautiful phrase right here that encompasses everything that is necessary to the complete salvation of a soul, the life of justification, sanctification, and ultimately final glory. Everything required to lead us home to that city whose maker and builder is God. And so I want you this morning, brothers and sisters, to praise God forevermore, that the Father drew you to Christ, if you believe in him, to whom you have been given for all eternity. Nothing can ever sever that bond. Nothing can ever take you out of his mighty hand. And as a result, you are precious in the eyes of your Savior.

So see with me the glorious hour that had come for the Lord Jesus and also the grand account of his office and ministry and authority. But finally, that leads us to the third point. I want you to see the great definition of eternal life, that eternal life that the Savior says he came to give us.

That eternal life and its definition, Jesus mercifully makes clear to us in verse 3. Look at it with me right there where he says, And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. This is eternal life. that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Brothers and sisters, the secret of possessing eternal life, of being justified and sanctified now, and of glorified hereafter, consists simply in this, in having a right-saving knowledge of the one true God, and of Jesus Christ, his son, whom he sent to save sinners. In short, our Lord declares that the one who rightly knows God in Christ is the person who possesses eternal life here and now and forevermore.

So in this regard, we must understand distinctly that mere head knowledge like that possessed by the devil and his angels. Head knowledge of facts about our Lord and Savior. This is not what our Lord means in this verse. For as James tells us, even the demons believe and they shudder. They acknowledge the existence and the kingship of Jesus, but never once do they give themselves in faith to the King eternal.

The knowledge that Jesus means here is a knowledge that dwells in the heart and influences every aspect of one's life. Remember in the Bible, knowledge means much more than knowing about a person. It means to know a person through and through, to have intimate knowledge and details of that person. And as F.F. Bruce says, this knowledge involves a personal relationship

The Father and the Son know each other in a mutuality of love. And by the knowledge of God, men and women are admitted to the mystery of this divine love, being loved by God and loving Him and one another in return. Y'all, that knowledge means that you know God. You know Him personally in this mutuality of love. in which you know that God loves you and you love him in return.

And so I must ask each and every one of us this morning, do you know experientially in your heart of hearts, do you know how much God has loved you in his son? Do you know how much he has loved you by giving his son to go to the cross for you? And do you love him and others in return as a result? That is the essential question of all of life.

A true saint then is one who knows the Lord. To know God on the one hand, his holiness, his purity, his hatred of sin, and to know Christ on the other hand, his redemption, his mediatorial office, his love to sinners. These are the two grand foundations of saving religion, according to J.C. Ryle.

Right knowledge, after all, lies at the heart of all vital Christianity, as light was the beginning of creation. We all have an earnest need, do we not, as Colossians 3.10 says, to be renewed in our knowledge, to be renewed in our understanding that was darkened by our sin and misery. We must know what we believe, for we cannot properly worship and love an unknown God.

And so the two great questions we must consider in the end are this. Do we know God? And do we know Christ are right? For you see, to know God outside Christ is to know a consuming fire that will only fill us with fear. But to know Christ without God will cause us not to value aright the great sacrifice of Christ on our behalf as we ought.

That is, we shall see no meaning in His cross in passion and in His awful suffering on our behalf if we do not understand and feel deeply the sin within us that deserves the wrath of Almighty God and that sent Jesus Christ to the cross. But to see clearly at the same time a holy, pure, sin-hating God and a loving, merciful Christ in God, the sin-atonishing Christ in God, is the very foundation of salvation.

In short, it is life eternal to know God and Christ rightly. And in knowing Him rightly, we will glorify Him. We shall desire to glorify Him. with every aspect of our hearts and lives, just like Christ did, who glorified the Father by doing all that was required to save us completely for all eternity, even going to Golgotha to die for us in that glorious hour that we might live eternally.

I want to say this morning, if you do not know God and the Lord Jesus Christ this morning, I beg you to come to him. He says in his word, he who comes to me in faith, I will not cast away. I will never cast away. And he offers you abundant life, everlasting. Come to him now. Today is the day of salvation. If you hear his voice this day, If you have

heard his voice and you have put your trust in him, brothers and sisters, may we never, never cease to praise him for this eternal life that we possess even now.

Let us pray. Father, it is astounding when we think of how much the Lord Jesus Christ has loved us, of how much you have loved us in sending your only begotten son into this world. And Jesus came to this very hour to do this very thing for our souls. Father, we praise you that you have given him the power and the authority to give eternal life to all whom you have given him, and that you give it freely and greatly to those who put their hope and trust in the Savior.

Father, I pray that if there are any in this room who know you not, that you would draw them to yourself with cords of irresistible love, that you would allure them to yourself by the power of your irresistible spirit and that you would make them your very own and give them abundant, abundant eternal life, life everlasting.

Lord, for those of us who know you, we can never stop praising you for what you have done for us in Christ. The payment has been made. All has been done. And Jesus says it is finished. We are his and he is ours now and for forevermore. And we praise your holy name for this eternal life.

We ask it all now in the glorious name of the one who loved us and gave himself for us, even Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.